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THE LIFE

OF

MARIE DE MEDICIS,

QUEEN OF FRANCE,

CONSORT OF HENRY IV., AND REGENT OF THE KINGDOM UNDER LOUIS XIII.

BY MISS PARDOE,

AUTHOR OF

"LOUIS XIV. AND THE COURT OF FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY,"
"THE CITY OF THE SULTAN," &c.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

55e4

LONDON:

COLBURN AND CO., PUBLISHERS,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1852.

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BOOK II.

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THE LIFE

OF

MARIE DE MEDICIS.

CHAPTER IX.

[1617.]

In the month of January the Count d'Auvergne, who had recently been liberated from the Bastille, was dispatched at the head of fourteen thousand men against the insurgent princes; and his departure was made a pretext for depriving the young King of the gentlemen of his household and of his body-guard, an insult which he deeply although silently resented. He had been attacked in the November of the preceding year by an indisposition which for a time had threatened the most serious consequences, and from whose latent effects he had not yet recovered. As time wore on, moreover, he was becoming more and more weary of the insignificance to which he was reduced by the delegated authority of his mother; and had easily suffered himself to be per-

suaded by de Luynes that her repeated offers to resign it, had merely been designed to make him feel the necessity of her assistance. As we have already shown, Louis XIII. derived little pleasure from the society of his young and lovely wife; he made no friends; and thus he was flung entirely into the power of his wily favourite; who, aware that the King could hate, although he could not love, was unremitting in his endeavours to excite him against Marie de Medicis and her favourite. The infatuated Concini seconded his efforts but too well; for, unable to bear his fortunes meekly, he paraded his riches and his power with an insolence which tended to justify the aversion of his enemies. On one occasion, shortly after the dismemberment of his little court, the monarch of France having refused to join a hunting-party organised by the Queen-mother, found himself entirely deserted save by de Luynes and a single valet; and overcome by mortification and melancholy, he leant his head upon his hand and wept bitterly. For some time not a sound was heard in the Louvre save the soughing of the wind through the tall trees of the palace-garden, and the measured tread of the sentinels, when suddenly a tumult rose in the great court; the trampling of horses, the voices of men, and the clashing of weapons were blent together; and dashing away his tears, Louis desired his favourite to ascertain the cause of the disturbance.

"It is the Maréchal d'Ancre, Sire, who has just alighted;" said de Luynes as he approached the window.

In a few minutes the Italian was announced, and entered the royal apartment followed by a train of forty gentlemen all magnificently attired. At this spectacle Louis started from his seat; and with a bitter smile inquired of the arrogant marquis his motive for thus parading before his sovereign a state which could only be intended as a satire upon his own privations.

To this question the vain-glorious adventurer replied in a tone of affected sympathy and patronage which festered in the heart of the young King; assuring him that his followers were at his own cost, and not at that of the state; and concluding his explanation by an offer of pecuniary aid, and a company of his regiment of Bussy-Zamet, which he had just brought from Normandy. Justly incensed by such an insult, Louis commanded him instantly to quit his presence; and he had no sooner withdrawn, followed by his glittering retinue, than the young monarch sank back upon his seat, and uttered the most bitter complaints of the affront to which he had been subjected.*

"And to this, Sire;" said de Luynes, as he stood beside his royal master; "to this insult, which is but the precursor of many others, you have been subjected by the Queen-mother."

"I will revenge myself!" exclaimed Louis with a sudden assumption of dignity.

"And how?" demanded the favourite emphatically.

* Richelieu, Unpublished MSS.

"You are called a King, but where are your great nobles? where are the officers of your household? where are your barons? So many princes, so many powers. France has no longer a King."

"And my people?" shouted the excited youth.

"You have no people. You are a mere puppet in the hands of an ambitious woman and an unprincipled adventurer."

"A puppet!" echoed Louis haughtily. "Do I not wear the crown of France?"

"So did Charles IX.;" was the unmoved reply; "yet he died to make way for Henry III. Concini and his wife, Sire, come from the same country as Catherine de Medicis. Isabeau de Bavière was a mother, yet she preferred her lover to her son."*

"Enough, enough, Sir;" said Louis, clutching the hilt of his sword; "I will hear no more, lest it should make me mad!"

De Luynes bowed in silence; he knew that the poisonous seed was sown, and he was content to wait until it should germinate.

The pecuniary difficulties of the kingdom exercised no influence over the festivities of the court; balls, banquets, and comedies took place in rapid succession; and the young Queen danced in a ballet which was the admiration of all the spectators; an example which was followed by the nobles of the royal household.† Still, however, it

* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 134.

† Bassompierre, Mém., p. 123.

was necessary to recruit the national treasury; and, accordingly, on the 10th of March a declaration was published by which the King confiscated all the property of the disaffected princes, and made it forfeit to the crown; while at the same time three separate bodies of troops attacked the rebels with complete success, and the royal arms were everywhere triumphant, when intelligence was forwarded to their leaders from the capital which induced an immediate cessation of hostilities.*

We have seen the effect of the insolence of Concini, and the insidious inferences of de Luynes, upon the mind of the young King, who had only six months previously been taught a lesson of dissimulation on the occasion of the arrest of Condé; and consequently it can scarcely be subject of surprise that, wounded to the heart's core, he was easily persuaded to exert in his own cause the subtlety which he had evinced at the bidding of another. He was now between fifteen and sixteen years of age, and was deeply imbued by the idea that he possessed an unlimited control alike over the properties, the liberty, the honour, and the lives of his subjects; but he was still utterly incapable of fulfilling his duties as a sovereign. His conceptions of right and wrong were confused and unstable; and he willingly listened to the advice of those whose counsels flattered his selfishness and his resentment. De Luynes had skilfully availed himself of this weakness; and as he was all-powerful

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 126. D'Estrées, Mém., p. 418.

with his suspicious and saturnine master, who saw in every one by whom he was approached either an enemy to be opposed, or a spy to be deceived, he was careful to introduce to him none save individuals whose insignificance rendered them incapable of interfering with his own interests, and who might be dismissed without comment or danger whenever he should deem their absence desirable. Against this arrangement neither the Queen-mother nor her ministers entered any protest. Louis truly was, as his favourite had so insolently asserted, a mere puppet in their hands; and the consequence of this undignified neglect was fatal to the intellectual progress of the young sovereign. On the pretext of requiring assistance in training the royal falcons, de Luynes had presented to Louis two young nobles, MM. du Tronçon and de Marcillac, men of good birth, but who had become dishonoured by their own vices; the former being accused of having betrayed his master, and the latter his sisters in order to enrich himself;* facts of which the favourite was, however, careful that the King should remain ignorant.

In addition to these disreputable adventurers, de Luynes also introduced to the intimity of his royal patron Déageant,† the principal clerk of Barbin, whom he had won

* Richelieu, Book VIII, p. 411.

† Déageant was a man of considerable talent, but crafty and ambitious; his whole career was one of deceit and truckling. After numerous vicissitudes he was committed to the Bastille, where he beguiled the weariness of captivity by composing his Memoirs.

over by promises of aggrandisement should he succeed in effecting the disgrace of Concini, which, as a natural consequence, must also involve that of his master; and, finally, a private soldier, and one of the gardeners of the palace. All these persons were instructed to excite the suspicions of the King against his mother and her ministers, a task in which it was by no means difficult to succeed, particularly when the treacherous Déageant had placed in his hands a number of counterfeited letters, wherein Barbin, at the pretended instigation of Concini, was supposed to entertain a design against his life, in order not only to prolong the authority of the Queen-mother, but also to insure the crown to her second and favourite son, Gaston d'Orleans.*

Skilfully as de Luynes conducted this affair, and despite the natural dissimulation of Louis XIII., the reiterated assertions and cautions of his familiar associates, did not fail to produce an involuntary effect upon his manner and deportment which aroused the suspicions of the Italian; who, with an infatuation almost incredible, instead of endeavouring to conciliate the young King, and to render himself less obnoxious to the people, resolved to make all bow before him, and to break the stubborn spirits that he failed to bend. In this desperate and insane policy he was, moreover, seconded by the counsels of Barbin, whose

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 391, 392. Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 583. Richelieu, Unpublished MSS.

impetuous temper, and anxiety to secure his own safety, alike urged him to support any measure which promised to maintain the government in the hands of Marie de Medicis and her favourite, in whose ruin he could not fail to be involved. So intemperately, indeed, did he pursue his purpose, that even Marie herself became alarmed; her most faithful adherents were absent with the army, while she had daily evidence of the activity of her enemies; and more than once at this period she declared her determination to withdraw from all participation in state affairs, and to resign her delegated authority, in order that her son might rule as he saw fit. From this purpose she was, however, constantly dissuaded by Barbin. "Madam;" he said on one occasion when the Queen-mother appeared more than ever resolved to follow out her determination; "if you once abandon the administration of government you will cut the throats of your children. Should you cease to rule they will be utterly lost.*

No wonder that her tenderness as a mother, joined to her ambition as a Queen, induced Marie de Medicis to yield to the representations of one of her most trusted counsellors, even while the cloud was deepening around her. As the great nobles murmured at the insolence and tyranny of the audacious Italian, their murmurs were echoed by the curses of the people;

* Vitt. Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iv, pp. 29—31. Mercure Français, 1617.

and in every murmur and in every curse the name of the Queen-mother was coupled with that of Concini and his wife. Even the maréchal himself at length betrayed tokens of alarm; he never ventured to traverse the streets of Paris without a numerous retinue, and even so attended he cowered beneath the menacing looks and gestures which he encountered on all sides. Again and again he urged Leonora to leave France; but he urged in vain; and finally he resolved to take measures for securing a safe retreat in his government of Normandy, should he be compelled to escape from the capital. As a preliminary and important step towards the accomplishment of this purpose, he caused the fortifications of Quillebœuf to be put into a state of perfect repair, and endeavoured to purchase the governments of several other places upon the Loire and the Seine; which, had he been enabled to carry out his object, could not have failed to render him independent of the royal authority. He also lavished large sums on every side, in order to secure partisans; and so excited the apprehensions of the citizens that bitter complaints were made, and threats uttered against himself, his royal mistress, and the new ministry.

All these, many of which had been excited by themselves, were faithfully reported by de Luynes and his agents to the young King, to whom they pointed out the probability of a general insurrection.

"What is to be done?" exclaimed Louis on one occasion; "the Maréchal d'Ancre has, as it would seem, under-

taken the ruin of my kingdom, and yet I dare not expostulate with my mother, for I cannot encounter her rage."

This puerile avowal decided the measures of the confederates; and ere long they succeeded in convincing the King that it would be quite possible to accomplish the overthrow of Concini without exposing himself to the anger which he dreaded.

On the 17th of January a royal declaration was verified by the Parliament, against the Duke de Nevers, who, although not yet in open revolt, was condemned as guilty of rebellion and *lèse-majesté*; and this premature act of severity caused general discontent throughout the capital. In vain did his sister the dowager-Duchess de Longueville, and Bentivoglio the papal nuncio endeavour to effect his reconciliation with the court. At the instigation of Richelieu, Concini, and Barbin, Marie de Medicis imperiously refused to revoke the sentence.

"The period of forbearance is gone by;" she said coldly in reply to the persevering representations of the prelate. "Indulgence has proved ineffectual hitherto; and it has consequently become imperative upon the King to adopt more rigorous measures. These gentlemen are enacting the petty sovereigns in their respective governments, but I shall take steps to suppress their insolence. Things have now been pushed to extremity; and we must either crush these rebellious and restless spirits, or permit the royal authority to be wrested from the sovereign."

Still, aware of the fatal consequences which must result from the uncompromising condemnation of one of the first princes in the land, Bentivoglio would not be discouraged; and on retiring from the presence of the Queen-mother, he reiterated his expostulations to Concini and Richelieu. With them, however, the zealous nuncio achieved no better success.

"His Majesty," said the Italian marshal haughtily; "will ere long possess an army of eighty thousand infantry and four thousand horse; the Count de Schomberg* has received an order to import experienced troops from Germany; and I have determined to raise five thousand men at my own cost; being resolved to teach the French people how all the faithful servants of the crown should feel it their duty to act on such an emergency."†

* Henri de Schomberg was the representative of an ancient family of Misnia, established in France. He succeeded his father, Gaspard de Schomberg, in the government of La Marche, and in 1617 served in Piedmont. He was also one of the generals of Louis XIII., in 1621 and 1622; and in 1625 was created Marshal of France. He distinguished himself by defeating the English in the battle of the Isle de Rhé in 1627, and in forcing the defile of Susa in 1629. In the following year he took Pignerol. He was then dispatched to Languedoc against the rebels, and in 1632 gained the battle of Castelnaudery, at which the Duke de Montmorency was made prisoner. For this victory he was invested with the government of Languedoc. He died in 1633.

† In his "History of the Parliament of Paris," Voltaire, whose party-spirit was ever too ready to betray his judgment, and to obscure his genius, has not hesitated, in allusion to the arrogant

The new secretary of state followed in the track of his patron, and with equal explicitness: "The King, Monseigneur;" he replied to the appeal of the nuncio; "is resolved to be the ruler of his own nation; and his Majesty trusts, moreover, that should the Duke de Nevers and the other princes openly take up arms, the Pope will excommunicate them as rebels to their sovereign."*

In addition to the discontent created among the people by this ill-judged pertinacity on the part of Marie and her government, a new cause of disaffection was elicited by the harshness with which the Queen-mother refused to comply with the demand made by the two Princesses de Condé, that the Prince should either be released from the Bastille, or put upon his trial, in order that he might prove his innocence of the crime of which he was accused. Compliance with this request would have placed Marie and her ministers in a position of such difficulty and danger that it was, moreover, refused with an abruptness which not only betrayed their alarm, but which

boast of the Italian adventurer, to express himself thus: "This Concini, at this very time, performed an action which merited a statue. Enriched by the liberality of Marie de Medicis, he raised at his own expense an army of between five and six thousand men against the rebels; he supported France as though she had been his native country." It is impossible to dwell upon the career of Concini, and not be startled by so extraordinary an encomium.

* Mercure Français, 1617. Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iv, pp. 27—35.

also tended still further to aggravate the irritation of his friends; and thus at a moment when the interests of the young King required that none but conciliatory measures should be adopted, the reckless ambition of a few individuals threatened to shake the very foundations of his throne, and to reduce the nation to a state of anarchy and convulsion.

The time was ripe for the project of de Luynes. The royal forces were everywhere victorious against the insurgent nobles; and Concini openly attributed to his own counsels a success which promised to make him all-powerful at court.

"You see, Sire;" said the favourite; "that this arrogant Italian, not satisfied by insulting your royal person, also claims the merit due to your brave army, and to your faithful generals. Will you continue to suffer this presumption to degrade you in the eyes of your people, and to undermine your authority over your barons? Take the reins of government into your own hands, and prove that you are a worthy descendant of St. Louis. Reform the government, and you will soon restore tranquillity to France; but do not any longer submit to see a base-born foreigner openly play the sovereign at your very court."

"Show me the means of doing this;" was the sullen reply; "I am as anxious as yourself to escape my present state of slavery. Devise some sure method of ridding me of the thrall to which I have been so long

condemned, and I will second your designs as earnestly as you can decide them."

"You have but to assert yourself, Sire, and to exert your authority."

"Were I to do so," retorted Louis; "I should only incur the hatred and ill-offices of my mother, for I should forthwith visit my vengeance upon her favourite; but we have had brawls enough in France, and I am weary of all these conflicting murmurs. Induce the maréchal and his wife to quit the country: let them carry away all their wealth, and even bribe them by new gifts should it be necessary. Impoverished as she is, France will still be able to find a few thousand crowns with which to purchase their departure."

Although this extraordinary leniency by no means fulfilled the wishes of de Luynes, he dared not venture further at the moment; and he accordingly induced the Bishop of Carcassonne to propose to the Queen-mother that she should herself suggest the return of Concini and Leonora to Italy. A year or two previously Marie de Medicis would have repulsed such a proposition with anger and impatience, but she had began to feel that her own authority had been invaded by the maréchal; and she consented to act upon the advice of the prelate.

Heart-stricken by misfortune, the maréchale listened without one expostulation to the order of her royal

foster-sister; her ambition had long been crushed, and she pined for rest. Aware, moreover, that by obeying the wishes of the Queen-mother, she should also fulfil those of her husband, she promised immediate compliance with the will of Marie, and forthwith commenced the necessary preparations.

This unqualified acquiescence in the pleasure of the Queen did not, however, satisfy the views of de Luynes, own could not brook that the immense wealth of the Maréchal d'Ancre should pass into other hands than his own; and he consequently laboured to impress upon the King that the apparent obedience of Concini was a mere subterfuge, as he publicly boasted that France contained not a single individual who would dare to attempt anything to his prejudice.

"Convince him to the contrary, Sire;" said one of his confidential friends to the young monarch. "Declare to the Queen-mother your determination to be governed no longer in your own kingdom, although you are still willing to be guided by her advice; and then command the instant departure of her dissimulating favourites. Do this, and you will not fail to be obeyed."

"Be not misled, Sire;" said de Luynes in his turn, when this officious but right-meaning counsellor had withdrawn; "your Majesty will not be obeyed so readily as many would lead you to anticipate. Concini is too rapacious willingly to leave the country while there remains one jewel to be filched from your royal crown;

and too ambitious to abandon without a struggle the factitious power which he has been permitted to exert."*

"What is to be done then, if the Italian refuses to quit France? I am in no position to compel his obedience, nor am I inclined to issue an order which I cannot enforce."

"Sire;" said de Luynes approaching the monarch, the querulousness of whose manner warned him that unless he alarmed him for his personal safety he would rather retire from the struggle than brave the anger of his mother, of whom he even now stood as much in awe as he had done during his childhood: "I see that the moment is at length come in which I must peril my own security in order to insure that of your Majesty. You have no longer an alternative if you desire to escape the machinations of the Maréchal d'Ancre. I have sure information that an attempt is about to be made to seize your person, and to take you out of the country."

"You rave, de Luynes!" exclaimed Louis, whose cheeks blenched at this unexpected announcement.

"Would that I did, Sire;" was the reply; "but should you not adopt immediate measures to circumvent the traitor whom I have denounced to you at the hazard of my own life, you will find that I have only too much foundation for the assertion that I have made."

* Déageant, Mém., pp. 38—44.

"In that case," vehemently retorted the young King, grasping the hilt of his sword; "it is indeed time that France should recognise her legitimate ruler, and that her monarch won his golden spurs. I will leave Paris, and place myself at the head of my army."

"Concini will then remain in undisputed possession of the capital;" remarked de Luynes coldly.

"What is my alternative, Albert?" demanded Louis utterly discouraged; "name it, and I will no sooner have become in fact as well as name the sovereign of France than you shall receive the *bâton* of a marshal."

"Commit M. d'Ancre to the Bastille, Sire. It is difficult to conspire within the gates of that fortress."

"Where shall I find an individual hardy enough to undertake such an enterprise?"

"I will present him to your Majesty within an hour, Sire."

"So be it, M. le Maréchal;" said Louis as he turned away. "My mother had the courage to provide a lodging for the first prince of the blood in the same prison, and I do not see why I should shrink from compelling him to share his dungeon with the husband of Leonora Galigaï."

While this plot was forming in the closet of the young King, Marie de Medicis was warned on her side, that should she not adopt the most stringent measures to counteract the intrigues of de Luynes, she would soon lose all her authority over the mind of

her son, who had latterly betrayed increased impatience of her control; and who was evidently desirous to emancipate himself from the thraldom to which he had hitherto so patiently submitted. Bassompierre among others, with his usual frankness, replied to his royal mistress, when she urged him to declare his sentiments upon the subject: "You have been well advised, Madam; you do not sufficiently consider your own interests; and one of these days the King will be taken from beneath your wing. His adherents have commenced by exciting him against your friends, and ere long they will excite him against yourself. Your authority is only precarious, and must cease whenever such may be the will of the sovereign. He will be easily persuaded to annul it, for we know how eagerly youth pants for power; and should his Majesty see fit one day to remove to St. Germain, and to command his principal officers, both Frenchmen and foreigners, no longer to recognise your rule, what will be your position? Even I myself, whose devotion to your Majesty is above suspicion, should be compelled to take my leave, humbly entreating your permission to obey the orders of the King. Judge therefore, Madam, if such must inevitably be the case with those who are deeply attached to your royal person, what may be the bearing of the rest. You would find yourself with your hands empty after a long regency."

Marie, however, refused to be convinced. She had

become so habituated to the passive obedience of her son that she could not bring herself to believe that he would ever venture to resist her will; and thus she rejected the wholesome advice of those who really desired her own welfare and that of the country; and increased the exasperation of Louis and his followers by lavishing upon Concini and his wife the most costly presents, in order to reconcile them to their enforced separation from herself.*

The profuse liberality of the Queen-mother to her favourites sealed their death-warrant, as every increase of their already almost fabulous wealth only strengthened the determination of de Luynes to build up his own fortunes upon the ruin of those of his detested enemy; but after the first burst of resolution which we have recorded, Louis had once more relapsed into vacillation and inertness. He still wept, but he no longer threatened; and it became necessary yet further to excite his indignation and hatred of Concini, in order to induce him to follow up the design which he had so eagerly formed against his liberty.

Means were not wanting. The young King was reminded by those about him of the niggard spirit in which the Italian had supplied his wants during his boyhood, after having obtained the sanction of the Regent to regulate the expenses of his little court. How often he had been compelled to ask as a favour

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 614—617. Dégeant, Mém., pp. 43—56. Bassompierre, Mém., pp. 123, 124.

that which was his own by right, while Concini was himself daily risking thousands of pistoles at the gaming-table, all of which had been drawn from the royal treasury. How insolently the maréchal had, upon an occasion when he was engaged at billiards with his Majesty, requested the royal permission to resume his plumed cap, and had replaced it on his head before that permission was expressed; with a hundred other puerile but mortifying incidents which made the blood of Louis boil in his veins, and placed him wholly in the power of his insidious associates.*

In order to hasten the resolution of the King, de Luynes next resolved to impress upon his mind that his former warning was about to be realised, and that ere long he would find himself a prisoner in his own capital; while, with a view to render this declaration feasible, he took means to have it reported to Marie de Medicis that Louis was about to escape from Paris, to cast off her authority, and to form a coalition with the insurgent princes. In consequence of this information, the counsellors of the Queen-mother induced her to double the guard at the Louvre, and to prevent the King from passing the city gates, either for the purpose of hunting, or of visiting, as he was frequently in the habit of doing, the suburban palaces. This was a crowning triumph for the cunning favourite, who thus saw his royal master reduced to seek all his

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iv, pp. 26, 27. Relation de la mort du Maréchal d'Ancre, at the end of the "Histoire des Favoris."

recreation in the gardens of the Tuileries; and he soon became convinced that his project had succeeded. For a few days Louis was too indignant to make any comment upon the treatment to which he was subjected, and he even affected to derive amusement from constructing miniature fortresses, bird-hunting, and other similar pursuits; but it was not long ere he became disgusted with these compulsatory pastimes, and wandered moodily through the avenues of the gardens, communing with his own thoughts, and nursing the bitter feelings which were rapidly sapping his better impulses.

When he had thus convinced himself that the King's powers of endurance had reached their extremest limit, de Luynes and his confederates on one occasion entered his chamber in the evening, but instead of suggesting to the young monarch, according to their usual habit, some method of whiling away the time until he retired to rest, they approached him with a melancholy and almost frightened deportment which at once aroused alike his curiosity and his apprehension. "What is the meaning of your manner, gentlemen?" asked Louis; "What has occurred?"

His attendants glanced at each other, as if trusting that some one of their number would be bold enough to take the responsibility of a reply upon himself; but no one spoke.

"I have asked a question, and I demand an answer;" said Louis with a threatening frown. "Do the very

members of my household—those who call themselves my friends—forget that, spite of all my trials, and all my privations, I am still the King of France ?"

"Sire;" murmured the one upon whom his eye had rested as he spoke; "it is because we are devoted, heart and soul, to your Majesty, that you see us in this mortal inquietude. In losing you we should lose everything; but since it is your command that we should tell you all, it is our duty to obey. The citizens of Paris are in a state of consternation. All your loyal subjects fear for your life. Tears and sobs are to be heard on every side. You are in the hands of Italians—of the countrymen and countrywomen of Catherine de Medicis; and everything is to be apprehended from people who know so well how to work out their ends by poison."

"Is it come to this ?" gasped the young King as he sank back upon his chair. "Am I to die mocked as I have lived? A sovereign without a will, a king without a throne, a monarch without a crown? The tool of needy adventurers and intriguing women; the victim of treachery and murder?" and the credulous boy leant his head upon his hands, and wept.

Before the chamber of Louis was closed that night upon his confidential friends it was decided that the weapon of the assassin and the axe of the executioner should rid him of Concini and his wife; and that his mother should be banished from the court.

When the King awoke on the following morning

de Luynes was already at his bedside, in order to counteract by his specious arguments and gloomy prognostics any less violent and criminal decision at which his royal master might have arrived during the solitude and silence of the night; and ably did the tempter perform his task. An increase of devotion and respect was skilfully blended with an apparent anxiety and alarm, which flattered the self-esteem and vanity of Louis, at the same time that they renewed all the terrors of the previous evening. His feeble representations were overruled; his filial misgivings were stifled; and the favourite at length quitted his presence satisfied that he would not seek to retract his orders.

The advice of de Luynes was not needed when he implored his Majesty to observe the greatest circumspection until the important design was carried out, for naturally timid and suspicious, Louis was already an adept in dissimulation; and the idea instantly occurred to him that should Concini or Leonora once have cause to apprehend that he meditated their destruction, his own life would pay the forfeit. De Luynes, however, strange as it may appear, was less discreet; and admitted so many persons to his confidence, that rumours of their peril reached the ears of the Queen-mother and her favourites; but, unhappily for themselves, they despised both the King and his minion too much to attach any importance to the idea of danger from such a quarter. Satisfied that Louis still pursued his boyish sports, which as a measure of precaution he

had resumed apparently with greater enthusiasm than ever, and that he could not leave the capital without the express permission of Marie de Medicis herself, they considered themselves safe; and thus, lulled into a fatal security, took no measures to avert the impending catastrophe.*

The mind is a species of moral daguerreotype; surround it with images of order, virtue, and beauty, enlighten it by the sun of truth, and every object will trace itself unerringly upon the surface, remaining engraven there for ever; but, on the other hand, if the accessories be evil, it will in like manner become invested with the attributes amid which it exists, and the luminous spark will be darkened by the pernicious atoms that have been suffered to collect about it.

Louis XIII. of France was at this moment an illustration of the principle. His boyhood and his youth had alike been familiar only with intrigue, deception, jealousy, and falsehood. His habits were at once saturnine and selfish; his temper gloomy and distrustful, and his feelings cold and self-centred.

His youth had already decided his manhood.

De Luynes was aware that he should experience little difficulty in finding the man he sought, when he assured his royal master that he knew one bold enough to attempt the life of Concini; his selection was indeed already made; and he had no misgiving of a refusal. The Baron de Vitry, captain of the body-guard then on

* Déageant, Mém., pp. 56, 57.

duty at the Louvre, and who was peculiarly obnoxious to the Italian favourite, returned his hate so openly that he refused to salute him as he entered and quitted the palace, and publicly declared that no command, come from whence it might, should ever compel him to do so.* De Luynes no sooner felt that a man of this determination might be useful, than he had sought his friendship; and now that the conspiracy had become ripe, he sent to invite him to an interview, during which he assured him that the King had great confidence not only in his affection for his person, but also in his inclination to serve him when the opportunity should present itself; that he believed him capable of great deeds, and that he would confide his life to him.

Vitry was a soldier of fortune, dependent upon his sword, and the little sentiment that he possessed was at once awakened by so unexpected a communication. As a natural consequence, therefore, he protested his readiness to risk life and limb at the pleasure of his Majesty: and declared that whatever might be the nature of the service required of him, he would execute it without hesitation or remonstrance.

On receiving this pledge, de Luynes, after exacting an oath of secrecy and obedience, beckoned to his companion to follow him; and throwing open the door of the royal closet, which was never closed against him, he introduced de Vitry without further preamble into the presence of the King.

* Richelieu, Book VIII, p. 416.

"M. de Vitry;" said Louis, when the favourite had explained the errand of the captain of the royal guard; "I thank you for your zeal, and I have faith in its sincerity. The Maréchal d'Ancre has conspired against my life. He must sleep to-morrow night in the Bastille."

"He shall be there, Sire, should the fortress still possess a bolt to draw upon him, if it be your royal will that I accomplish his arrest."

"M. de Vitry, you will have earned a marshal's *bâton*."

"Sire!" exclaimed the soldier, dropping on his knee before the King; "I will obey you to the death."

"I must never again be insulted by his presence;" said Louis, fixing his eyes, which flashed for an instant with a threatening light, full upon the upturned countenance of de Vitry. "Rise, Sir;" he added as he turned suddenly away; "I have perfect confidence in your fidelity."

"But—should he resist, Sire?" asked the new conspirator, anxious not to exceed his orders.

"Kill him!" replied de Luynes in a hoarse whisper; "do you not yet understand how you are to earn your *bâton?*"

The two friends exchanged glances; and after a profound bow, de Vitry withdrew from the royal closet.

The indiscretion of de Luynes had been so great

that a rumour of the perilous position of Concini did not fail to reach the ears of Richelieu. We have already stated that on his arrival at court, the Bishop of Luçon had been warmly patronised by the Italian favourite, who openly declared that he had found a man capable of giving a lesson *à tutti barboni*,* thereby alluding to the ancient ministers of Henry IV.;† and that it was moreover through his agency that Marie de Medicis had appointed the wily prelate secretary of state; but Richelieu was too subtle a diplomatist to allow a feeling of gratitude to interfere with his advancement; and he consequently no sooner ascertained beyond all possibility of mistake that his two patrons, the Queen-mother and her favourite, were about to succumb beneath the cabal of de Luynes, than, anxious to retain office, he hastened to dispatch his brother-in-law M. de Pontcourlay, to the latter, with instructions to offer his services, and to assure him that he had only consented to accept the charge which he then held, in order that he might through this medium be enabled to devote himself to the interests of the King.

Anxious to strengthen his party, de Luynes received the advances of Richelieu with great courtesy, although he was far from desiring the co-operation of so dangerous an ally; and a day or two subsequently the treacherous prelate was introduced into the private closet of Louis; where, in addition to his previous

* Brienne, Mém., vol. i, p. 300, note.

† Déageant, Mém., p. 48. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 625, 626.

professions, he went so far as to pledge himself to the young monarch that he would give him timely intimation of the most hidden designs of the Queen-mother and the Maréchal d'Ancre.

It was at length decided that Concini should die on Sunday, the 23rd of April; but as the day approached, Louis became terrified at his own audacity, and it required all the influence of de Luynes and his brothers to prevent his retracting the fatal order which he had given. He was so young coldly to contemplate treachery and murder, and so helpless in the event of failure, that his conscience and his timidity alike urged him to revoke the sentence of the unsuspicious victim; nor was he ultimately induced to persevere, until reminded by his insidious advisers that too many persons were now aware of his intentions for them to remain secret, should their execution be long delayed.

On this occasion, however, although every preparation had been made, Concini was saved by a mere accident. He chanced to be delayed as he was about to leave his house, and did not in consequence reach the Louvre until the King had quitted the palace in order to attend mass at the chapel of the Petit Bourbon. Instead, therefore, of proceeding in the first place to the apartments of his Majesty, as had been anticipated, the maréchal no sooner ascertained that Louis was already gone, than he hastened to pay his respects to the Queen-mother, for which purpose he took a different direction. This

unexpected impediment greatly embarrassed the conspirators, who, secure of success, had displayed an extraordinary want of caution. In addition to his brother M. du Hallier, Vitry had assembled a great number of his friends in the court of the palace, who, although they all wore their cloaks, had nevertheless allowed it to be perceived that they carried pistols in their belts, contrary to the edict forbidding the use of such weapons within the limits of the royal residence. In compliance with the commands of Louis himself, moreover, the body-guard were under arms; and the unwonted movement in the immediate vicinity of his apartments was so evident, and withal so hostile in its aspect, that a rumour soon spread through the palace that some serious enterprise was in contemplation.

And, meanwhile, the young monarch was on his knees before the altar of his God, praying, or seeming to pray; asking that his trespasses might be forgiven as he forgave those who trespassed against him; although he anticipated that before his return to his desecrated palace-home the deed of blood would be accomplished. Suddenly, however, his homily was interrupted by the entrance of Vitry into the chapel, who, approaching de Luynes, whispered to him the tidings of his disappointment. In another second the lips of the favourite touched the ear of his royal master, to whom he hurriedly murmured:

"Sire, the man you wot of is now in the apartment of the Queen-mother. What do you decide? All is in readiness."

"Touch him not in her presence as you value your lives;" was the agitated reply; "we shall find him at the Louvre on our return."

A brief interval of suspense succeeded. The prelate who had officiated then uttered the final blessing; and as the carriage which contained the King and his favourite entered the palace by one gate, that of Concini quitted it by another. Inexperienced as he was, however, Louis at once perceived that he was no longer in a position to recede; and hasty orders were issued to Vitry and his friends to accomplish their fatal project on the following day, while the King at the same time secretly commanded that the light-horse of his body-guard, and the members of his household, should be in attendance at an early hour in the morning, as well as a coach and six, at the entrance of the great gallery. The pretext for this arrangement was a hunting-party; but its actual intention was to insure and protect the King's flight should his purpose prematurely transpire or prove abortive. And, meanwhile, Marie de Medicis slept, wholly unsuspicious of the change which was about to be effected in her fortunes!

There is something singularly appalling in all the circumstances which formed the prelude to this contemplated tragedy. Hitherto the Queen-mother had created dangers for herself—had started at shadows—and distrusted even those who sought to serve her; while her son, silent, saturnine, and inert, had patiently submitted to the indignities and insults which had been

heaped upon him, as though he were either unconscious or reckless of their extent; and the Italian adventurer had braved his enemies, and appeared to defy fate itself. Now, however, when the blow was about to be struck; when the ball and the blade were alike ready to do their deadly office, all the principal personages in the bloody drama had suddenly assumed new characters. Marie slept; the boy-King had become the head of a conspiracy; and the Maréchal d'Ancre, enriched and ennobled beyond the wildest dreams of his ambition, was preparing to quit the country of his adoption, and to seek rest and peace in his own land. Another month, perhaps another week, and he would have left France, probably for ever.

History presents few such anomalies; and it appears scarcely credible that so ill-organised a plot, hatched moreover under the very eyes of those who were to become its victims, and revealed to upwards of a score of persons, many of whom were incited to join it from merely venal motives, should ever have attained its accomplishment. The fiat had, however, gone forth; and the unfortunate Concini, whose tragical fate compels sympathy despite all his faults, entered the court of the Louvre at ten o'clock in the morning of the 24th of April, 1617, there to meet his death.

An hour or two after dawn one of the gentlemen of the royal bedchamber announced that the King having been indisposed throughout the night, the great gates of the Louvre were to remain closed, and the public

excluded, in order that his Majesty might not be disturbed. This order did not, however, affect the Maréchal d'Ancre, as he was no sooner seen to approach, followed by a numerous retinue of gentlemen, and attended by several of his friends, than the bolts were withdrawn, and he was permitted to pass the barrier, which was instantly re-closed, to the exclusion of the greater number of his suite. A man who had been stationed over the gate then waved his hat three times above his head; upon which Vitry, who had until that moment been seated in one of the windows of the guard-room calmly conversing with the officers on duty, immediately rose, and drawing his cloak closely about him, hurried down the staircase, at the foot of which he was joined as if accidentally by du Hallier and others of the conspirators, who, apparently engaged in conversation, slowly approached their intended victim. Among the persons who surrounded Concini there chanced to be several who were acquainted with Vitry, and greatly to his annoyance he was compelled to allow the maréchal to pass on while he returned their greetings; in a few instants, however, he again found himself at liberty, when he discovered that amid the crowd he had lost sight of the Italian.

"Where is he?" he inquired hurriedly of one of his confederates.

"Yonder;" was the reply; "he has stopped at the foot of the bridge to read a letter."

Vitry bounded towards his prey; and as Concini,

absorbed in his occupation still read on, he felt the grasp of a strong hand upon his arm, and on looking up, he saw the captain of the guard standing at his side. Before he had time to inquire the meaning of this affront, Vitry had already uttered the ominous words: "I arrest you in the King's name."

"Arrest me!" exclaimed the maréchal with astonishment, as he clutched the hilt of his sword.

"Yes, you;" replied Vitry haughtily; and while he spoke he made a signal which was instantly responded to by the simultaneous report of three pistol-shots. As the sounds ceased Concini dropped upon his knees, and fell against the parapet of the bridge; several weapons were then thrust into his body; and finally Vitry, with wanton and revolting cruelty, gave him so violent a kick that he extended his body at full length upon the pavement, where it was immediately pilfered of every article of value; among other things diamonds of great price, and notes of hand to a large amount were abstracted from the pockets of his vest.*

A few of his followers endeavoured to interpose; but in a second or two all was over, and they were warned by the bystanders instantly to sheathe their swords, and to beware of opposing the orders of the King. They had scarcely had time to obey this bidding when Louis presented himself at the window of a closet joining the guard-room, to which, from its height, he was obliged

* Brienne, Mém., vol. i, p. 329.

to be lifted by M. d'Ornano;* there, by the advice of those about him, the young King appeared with a smile upon his face; and as the members of the cabal raised a cry of "Vive le Roi!" he shouted to his captain of the guard: "I thank you, Vitry; now I am really a King." Then showing himself, sword in hand, successively at each window of the guard-room, he cried out to the soldiers who were posted beneath: "To arms! comrades, to arms!"

Meanwhile Vitry, by the direction of de Luynes, proceeded to the hall occupied by the body-guard of the Queen-mother, and demanded their weapons, which they refused to deliver up without an express order to that

* Alphonse d'Ornano, colonel-general of the Corsican troops in the French service, and himself a native of Corsica, was the son of San Pietro di Bastelica, a man of low birth, who attained to the rank of colonel of the Corsican infantry in France; and who married (in 1548) Vanina d'Ornano, the daughter and heiress of one of the most wealthy nobles in Corsica. The avowed enemy of the Genoese, by whom himself and his family were proscribed and banished from their native island, San Pietro strangled his wife with his own hands, on discovering that she had attempted to escape from Marseilles in order to obtain a revocation of the edict issued by the Genoese in 1563. Alphonse, the son of San Pietro, to whom his very name had become odious, adopted that of his mother, under which he rendered important services to Henry IV. during the wars of the League; and by whom he was first appointed lieutenant of the King in Dauphiny, and subsequently Marshal of France (1595). He died in 1620, at the age of seventy-two. He was a man of probity, but had inherited the violent character of his father.

effect from their own officers; upon which the latter were commanded in the name of the King to withdraw their men, and to remain in the ante-chamber of their mistress. The royal guards then took possession of all the avenues of the Louvre; and horsemen were dispatched with instructions to traverse the streets of the capital, and to apprise the citizens of the death of Concini. A dense crowd soon collected in the court of the Louvre, and cries of "Vive le Roi!" resounded on all sides.

A murder had been committed, and the ovation was one which would only have befitted a victory. Louis XIII. had proclaimed himself a King; and the hand with which he grasped his sceptre was steeped in blood. Louis "the Just"—we append to his baptismal appellation that which was gravely conferred upon him on this occasion by both clergy and laity—stood, an undisguised assassin and a moral matricide, before the people who were about to be subjected to his rule.*

Within an hour not only was the Queen-mother a prisoner in her own apartments, but the seals were restored to M. du Vair, and Barbin was in the Bastille *in the most rigorous confinement.*† These precau-

* Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 625—632. Brienne, Mém., vol. i, p. 327. Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 393—395. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 134—136. Matthieu, Hist. des Derniers Troubles, Book III, p. 603.

† Richelieu, Unpublished MS. The words underlined in the text are in the cardinal's autograph on the margin of the manuscript.

tionary measures taken, Louis proceeded to the great gallery leaning upon the arm of de Luynes; and on perceiving M. de Brienne, who with many other nobles had hastened to present his respects and congratulations(!) to the young monarch, he was so unable to control his delight that, without awaiting the salutation of the count, he exclaimed triumphantly: "I am now a King, and no one can take precedence of me."*

Shortly afterwards the King encountered the Bishop of Luçon-Richelieu, whose confident deportment betokened his conviction of a gracious reception, as he prepared to pay his court in his turn; but the compliments of the prelate were abruptly broken in upon by an imperative command to quit the palace, and the announcement of his discontinuance in office. No wonder that Richelieu murmured in his heart's core at this unlooked-for severity; for he had in truth that very morning striven to merit the royal smile—striven against conscience, however, and all the holiest and most sacred feelings of humanity. One of the friends of Concini, alarmed by the ominous proceedings at the Louvre, and instinctively persuaded that the life of the Italian was threatened, had hurriedly dispatched a letter to Richelieu, in which he stated his reasons for the apprehensions he expressed; and urged the prelate, in memory of the many services for which he was indebted to the intended victim, to interpose

* Brienne, Mém., vol. i, p. 327.

his influence in his behalf, and to endeavour to avert the blow. The bishop, who had not yet left his bed, glanced over the missive, thrust it beneath his pillow, desired the messenger to withdraw, and remained quietly in his chamber until he was apprised by the tumult without that all was over. Then, and not till then, he hastened to the Louvre; where we have already stated the nature of his reception.

As the throng of nobles increased, and crowded about the King so as considerably to inconvenience him, he was lifted upon a billiard-table, from which extraordinary eminence he received their compliments and congratulations upon the murder to which he had been accessory only an hour before; and which the first president of the Parliament of Paris (whose extreme haste to pay his court to his new master was so great, that being unable immediately to procure a carriage, he proceeded to the Louvre on foot) designated *his happy deliverance.** Nothing, in short, but plumed hats sweeping the marble floor, flexile forms bending to the earth, and lips wreathed in smiles, were to be seen in the kingly hall in which Henry IV. had loved to discuss grave topics with his sturdy minister the Duke de Sully, and which Marie de Medicis, in her day of pride and power, had enriched with the glorious productions of her immortal *protégé*, Rubens the painter-prince as she was wont to call him. None cared to

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 637. Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 396.

remember at that moment that Henry the Great was in his grave; and that his royal widow had been sacrificed to the insatiable ambition and the quenchless hate of a low-born minion.

But it is now time that we should return to the Queen-mother.

Alarmed by the report of fire-arms within the boundary of the palace, Marie de Medicis, who had not yet completed her toilette, desired Caterina Salveggia to throw open one of the windows, and to demand the cause of so singular and unpardonable an infraction of the law. She was obeyed: and the Italian waiting-woman no sooner perceived de Vitry advancing beneath the apartments of her royal mistress than she inquired of him what had occurred.

"The Maréchal d'Ancre has been shot," was his abrupt reply.

"Shot!" echoed Caterina; "and by whom?"

"By myself;" said de Vitry composedly; "and by the command of the King."

"Madam!" exclaimed the terrified attendant, as she rushed to the side of the Queen-mother; "M. le Maréchal has been killed by order of his Majesty."

Marie de Medicis started from her seat; her cheeks were blenched, her lips quivered, and she wrung her hands convulsively, as she gasped out: "I have reigned seven years. I must now think only of a crown in heaven."

Her attendants, stupified with terror, rapidly gathered

found her; and ere long she learnt that her guards had been disarmed, and replaced by those of the King. She listened vaguely to each successive report, and paced the room with rapid but uncertain steps. At length she exclaimed vehemently: "I do not regret that my son should have taken the life of Concini, if he believed it necessary to the safety of his kingdom; but his distrust of myself in concealing such a project from my knowledge is more than I can bear."

When the first violence of her emotion had subsided she sank into a seat, and with clasped hands and drooping head, appeared to be absorbed in deep and bitter thought; for at intervals the blood mounted to her brow and burned there for a time; after which she again became as pale as ashes, and as motionless as a corpse. She was still in this attitude when one of her confidential servants imprudently approached her, and inquired how the melancholy event was to be communicated to the Maréchale d'Ancre? "Perhaps;" he incautiously suggested; "your Majesty will condescend to acquaint her with it yourself."

Marie de Medicis suddenly raised her hand, swept back her dishevelled hair from her face, and fixing her flashing eyes upon the officious gentleman, passionately replied: "I have other things to attend to at this moment. If no one can tell the maréchale that her husband has been killed, *let them sing it to her*. Let me never again hear the name of those people. I told them long ago that they would do right to return to

Italy. Yes;" she continued, more particularly addressing the dowager-Duchess de Guise, the Princess de Conti, and the other ladies who were standing near her; "they have at last accomplished my ruin: I foresaw it; I warned them; but they would not be convinced. I told Concini that he had no time to lose, but with his habitual self-sufficiency he declared repeatedly that the King became more courteous to him every day. I was not deceived, however; I charged him not to trust to appearances, for that Louis never said all he thought: he disregarded my words; and he has now involved me in his own destruction."*

After this outburst of temper, no one ventured to intrude even a remark upon the Queen-mother, who once more fell into a deep reverie; from which she, however, ultimately aroused herself to demand M. de Bressieux.† The equerry immediately approached.

"Go, Sir," she said; "to his Majesty; and request that he will grant me an interview."

Her command was obeyed, and in a few moments de Bressieux found himself in the presence of the King, to whom he delivered his message.

"I am occupied at present;" was the cold reply; "and the visit of the Queen must be delayed until a better opportunity. Tell her, however, from me

* Lumières pour l'Histoire de France. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 634, 635.

† The Marquis de Bressieux was first equerry to Marie de Medicis.

that I shall always honour her, and that I feel towards her all the sentiments of a good son; but God willed that I should be born a King; and I am resolved henceforth to govern for myself. It is desirable that the Queen should have no other guards but mine. Let her know that such is my will."

Marie de Medicis listened incredulously when, on his return to her apartment, the equerry announced the failure of his mission. She would not comprehend that the stripling who had, until that day shrank before her frown, could thus suddenly have acquired the necessary courage to brave her authority; and once more M. de Bressieux was instructed to urge her request upon the King. As he reached the royal ante-room her envoy encountered de Luynes, who dreaded nothing so much as a meeting between the mother and son, which could scarcely fail to prove fatal to himself; and he accordingly reported the return of the applicant in a manner which induced Louis to exclaim impatiently: "If he is here by desire of the Queen his mistress, tell him that there is nothing to apprehend, as I shall treat her well."*

Still Marie de Medicis would not be discouraged. She felt that in order to avert the ruin which impended over her, she must put every instant to its use; and accordingly M. de Bressieux was a third time dispatched to solicit in still more urgent terms that she might be permitted to see his Majesty, were it only for a

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iv, pp. 61, 62.

few moments. But, unfortunately for the agonised Queen, the triumphant favourite was as fully aware as herself of the value of time at so critical a juncture: and he had, accordingly, profited so well by the opportunities which he was enabled to command, that on this last occasion the marquis was rudely commanded to abstain from all further intrusion upon his Majesty unless he wished to repent his pertinacity within the walls of a prison.

Convinced, at last, that there was no hope through her own agency of effecting her object, the Queen-mother next endeavoured to secure its accomplishment through the medium of her daughter-in-law, the two princesses, and the Duke d'Anjou; but when she summoned them to her apartment, she was informed that each and all had been forbidden to hold any intercourse with herself until the pleasure of the King should be made known.

The despair of the unhappy Marie was at its height; and as she paced her apartment, and approached a window looking upon the gardens, she discovered that a bridge which she had caused to be constructed for the purpose of reaching them without being compelled to traverse the galleries of the palace, was already in process of demolition; while she was also made aware that every other avenue leading to her apartments was strictly guarded, and thus she saw herself a prisoner in her own palace, and entirely at the mercy of her son's advisers. Yet still she struggled against so cruel

a conviction; and, eager to test its truth, sent to desire the presence of one of her confidential friends. Her messenger was not, however, permitted to accomplish his errand; but returned with the heart-sickening intelligence that thenceforward her Majesty would not be permitted to hold any communication, save with the members of her own immediate household, without the express sanction of the King.*

While the Queen-mother was still writhing under this new indignity, the unfortunate Leonora, who had been apprised of the murder of her husband, rushed into the apartment; and flinging herself at the feet of her royal foster-sister, implored her protection for herself and her young son; but sudden adversity had steeled the heart of Marie de Medicis; and sternly upbraiding her former favourite as the cause of her own overthrow, she refused to afford her any aid, and commanded her instantly to retire. The wretched woman obeyed without comment or remonstrance; and having regained her own apartment, which was immediately contiguous to that of the Queen, she hastened to conceal the crown-jewels which were in her keeping between the mattresses of her bed, with the exception of the rings, which were of great value, and which she habitually wore. This duty accomplished, she threw herself upon her miserable couch to await in trembling and in tears the next act

* Rambure, MS. Memoirs, vol. vii, p. 66. Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 138. Bassompierre, Mém., p. 126.

of the frightful tragedy in which she was called upon to play so conspicuous a part. Her suspense was not of long duration, as only a few minutes had elapsed when a tumult was heard without, amid which cries of "Vive le Roi!" "Vive M. de Luynes!" and "Death to the Italian!" were distinctly audible.

Leonora bounded from her recumbent position like a lioness at bay. Her parted lips were bloodless, her breath came quick and hard, and her heart heaved by its violent pulsations the rich velvet of the robe in which she was attired.

"My child—" she at length gasped out, as her attendants gathered about her; "save my child. He at least is guiltless."

The appeal was not made in vain. M. de Rouvray* took her little son, the Count de la Péna, by the hand, raised him in his arms that his lips might once more touch those of his mother, and then, without uttering a syllable, led him from the apartment. In another instant the Norman noble was once more at her side. "The child is in sure hands;" he said hurriedly; "and now, Madam, to provide for your own safety. Follow me—you have no time to spare."

It was, however, already too late; for as de Rouvray

† Louis, Sieur de Rouvray, was a Norman noble, and a descendant of the celebrated Louis de Rouvray, who was one of the hundred and eighty devoted men who, in 1421, shut themselves up in Mont Saint-Michel, in order to defend it against the English.

ceased speaking, Vitry, still reeking with the blood of Concini, stood upon the threshold of the chamber, attended by a troop of halberdiers.

"You are my prisoner, Madam;" he exclaimed harshly: "prepare to accompany me to the Bastille."

"I am ready, Sir;" replied the maréchale, with the composure of utter despair. "All is as it should be. The murderer of the husband is well-fitted to be the gaoler of the wife."

The rings of the crown were then removed from the fingers of the marquise; and upon her refusal to reveal where the remainder of the jewels were secreted, her apartments were strictly searched; and not only were the royal ornaments carried off by de Vitry and his companions, but also every other article of value which fell into their hands. While this unmanly outrage was going on about her, the Maréchale d'Ancre passively permitted her women to fasten her mantle, and to adjust her mask and hood: her thoughts were evidently elsewhere. Within a few yards of where she was then seated, and within hearing of the tumult occasioned by the reckless insolence of the men-at-arms by whom she was surrounded, her foster-sister, the playmate of her girlhood, the friend of her youth, and the protectress of her latter years—whose tears she had so often wiped away, whose sorrows she had so often soothed, and whose hopes and fears she had equally shared throughout so long a period—remained cold and unmoved by her misery. It was a bitter pang: and

drops of anguish, wrung from the deepest recesses of a bursting heart, fell large and heavy upon the cheek of the new-made widow and the abandoned favourite, and moistened her clasped hands. None, however, heeded her agony; each of her attendants, whatever might have been the previous attachment of all to her person, was now absorbed by her own terrors; while the strangers who had invaded her privacy were eager, under the specious pretext of performing their duty to the King, to avail themselves to the uttermost of so favourable an opportunity of furthering their individual interests.

At length all was over: every cabinet and chest had been ransacked to its deepest recesses; every article of use or ornament had been displaced in search of plunder; and the wretched Leonora was warned that it was time to depart. She rose silent and rigid; and as de Vitry preceded her from the room, his guards closed behind her. A carriage was in waiting at the foot of the staircase by which she descended; the twilight was rapidly deepening into night; and her melancholy path was lighted at intervals by the torches of numerous attendants who were hurrying through the corridors in the service of their several employers. The long dark shadows of the Louvre lay heavy on the dull pavement of the court, save where they were broken at intervals by the resinous flambeaux which glared and flickered against the walls of the building. All looked wild, and sad, and strange; and not one kindly accent fell upon

the ear of the unhappy captive as she was hurried onward. A few harsh words were uttered in a tone of authority: she was lifted into the conveyance which had been prepared for her: the cavalcade slowly traversed the inclosure; and then as the iron gates of the palace were passed, the horses were lashed into a gallop; and in less than an hour the life-long companion of Marie de Medicis, husbandless, childless, and friendless, was an occupant of the gloomy fortress-chamber which had recently been vacated by the Prince de Condé.

The noise created by the entrance of the new prisoner; the clashing of arms, the grating of the heavy portcullis, as it groaned and strained in its ascent, the dull fall of the drawbridge, the voices of men, and the rattling of wheels, awakened the Prince; who, with the natural weariness of a captive, had already retired to rest. Summoning an attendant he demanded to know the cause of the disturbance.

"It is M. de Vitry, Monseigneur;" was the reply; "who has just transferred the Maréchale d'Ancre to the safe keeping of the governor."

"Good!" said the Prince as he once more settled himself to sleep; "I have now one enemy the less."*

This rapid succession of misfortunes produced an extraordinary effect upon the sensitive organisation of Leonora Galigaï. As we have already hinted, she had for a considerable period suffered under mental hallucination; and the disease had latterly fastened so tenaciously

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mére et du Fils, vol. i, p. 219.

upon her system that she had even shunned the presence of the Queen, believing that every eye which rested on her produced some baneful result; while her very attendants were dismissed from her presence when they had terminated their duties, and she thus remained hour after hour in solitude, brooding over the sickly fancies of her disordered brain. The sight of her husband's murderer had, however, instantly and for ever restored the healthful tone of her mind. She did not weep, for she had already exhausted all her tears; she asked no mercy, for she was aware that whatever might be her fate, she was alike prejudged and pre-condemned; but she resigned herself passively into the hands of her persecutors, with a Spartan firmness which she maintained to the last hour of her existence.

Who shall venture to follow her to her prison-cell, and to trace the tide of back-breaking thought, which rolled like a receding wave from the present to the past? Now, indeed, she left little behind her to regret. From the husband to whom she had once been devoted with a love which blinded her to all his errors and to all his egotism, she had, during the last two years, been almost utterly estranged; her first-born and idolised daughter was in her grave; the royal friend and almost relative, to whom she had clung from her youth up, had refused even a tear to her sufferings, or a shelter to her peril; her hoarded wealth was in the hands of her enemies; and of all that she once boasted there remained her only son. And what might be his fate?

But memory held wider stores that these; and who can doubt that throughout that first long night of captivity, they were probed to their very depths! What palace-pageants—what closet-conspiracies—what struggles for pre-eminence and power—what heartburnings at defeat, and exultation at success—must have swept hurricane-like across her awakened soul, to be forgotten in their turn amid the childish sports of her early and hopeful years, under the sunny sky and amid the orange-groves of her native Florence, where, with her royal playmate, she chased the hours along as though they were made only for the happy.

Did she sleep the weary and outworn sleep of the wretched while those sweet and soothing visions were still busy at her heart? And if so, breathes there one, whatever may have been her faults, who would have aroused her from such a slumber?

CHAPTER X.

[1617.]

THE COUNT DE LA PÉNA—ANNE OF AUSTRIA AND THE ORPHAN—POPULAR ATROCITIES—THE WAGES OF CRIME—SUBMISSION OF THE DUKE DE MAYENNE—SUSPENSION OF HOSTILITIES—THE GREAT NOBLES RETURN TO THE CAPITAL—LOUIS REFUSES TO BE RECONCILED WITH HIS MOTHER—INSOLENCE OF VITRY—GENEROSITY OF THE DUKE DE ROHAN — MARIE DE MEDICIS RESOLVES TO RETIRE FROM THE COURT — RICHELIEU OFFERS TO SHARE HER EXILE—HE BECOMES THE SECRET EMISSARY OF DE LUYNES — GRATITUDE OF THE DELUDED QUEEN— A PARTING INTERVIEW — MARIE DE MEDICIS PROCEEDS TO BLOIS — DESTITUTION OF THE MARÉCHALE D'ANCRE — HER DESPAIR—ROYAL RECREATIONS — A FATAL PARALLEL — MADAME DE CONDÉ REQUESTS PERMISSION TO SHARE THE CAPTIVITY OF HER HUSBAND—TRIAL OF MADAME D'ANCRE — HER EXECUTION — CUPIDITY OF DE LUYNES — JUSTICE OF THE GRAND-DUKE OF TUSCANY—DEATH OF THE PRESIDENT DE THOU—MARRIAGE OF DE LUYNES WITH MADEMOISELLE DE MONTBAZON—DE LUYNES IS CREATED DUKE AND PEER—DEATH OF M. DE VILLEROY—RECAL OF THE OLD MINISTERS—POLICY OF DE LUYNES— HIS SUSPICION—HIS AMBITION—DE LUYNES LODGES HIS BROTHERS IN THE LOUVRE—THE SIGN OF "THE THREE KINGS"—LOUIS RESOLVES TO RE-ESTABLISH THE ROMAN RELIGION IN BEARN, AND TO ANNEX THAT PRINCIPALITY TO THE CROWN OF FRANCE—MEETING OF THE "NOTABLES" AT ROUEN—THE FRENCH MARCH TO THE SUPPORT OF THE DUKE OF SAVOY.

CHAPTER X.

[1617.]

On the return of de Vitry from the Bastille he found the hôtel of the Maréchal d'Ancre entirely pillaged, not even excepting the chamber of the little Count de la Péna, whose escape having been prevented, he was also placed under arrest, and left until the following morning without clothes, food, or bed. On the morrow, however, the Count de Fiesque,* touched by the extreme beauty and desolate condition of the child, and probably anxious to secure one friend to him in his necessity, became answerable for his safe keeping; and, wrapping him in the cloak of one of his lacqueys, he carried him to the Louvre, and introduced him to the young Queen, informing her Majesty that no one at court could dance a *bransle* in such perfection. Anne of Austria was enchanted with the beauty of the boy, who had just attained his twelfth

* The Count de Fiesque was the equerry of Anne of Austria.

year, and whose intellect was as remarkable as his person; but giddy, thoughtless, and ever eager for amusement, the girl-Queen, overlooking the fatal circumstances in which he was placed, immediately commanded that he should exhibit his talent; and the poor fatherless child, whose whole career had been blighted only a few short hours before, was compelled to this unseemly display; after which he was regaled with sweetmeats, and returned to the custody of his gaolers, by whom he was shortly afterwards imprisoned in the castle of Nantes.*

While this heartless scene was taking place in an apartment of the palace, another of a far more frightful character was going forward in the streets of Paris; but before we describe this, we must explain all that had passed since the murder of the Maréchal d'Ancre. As we have already stated, the body was pillaged where it lay; and then, when no further booty could be anticipated, it was carried into a small closet attached to the common guard-room, where it remained until nightfall; when a coarse sheet, for which fifty sous were given, was folded about it, and it was buried without any religious ceremony under the organ of the church of St. Germain de l'Auxerrois near the Louvre. A priest who attempted to chant a funeral-hymn as it was laid in the earth was compelled to desist, in order that the place of burial might not be known; and the flags which had been raised were so carefully replaced that it was only by

* Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 643, 644. Pontchartrain, Mém., p. 223.

secret information that the spot could possibly have been discovered. This information was however given; and early in the morning the pavement was torn up, a rope fastened round the neck of the corpse, which was then dragged through the streets by the infuriated mob; and the desecrated remains of the recently powerful favourite were hung by the feet to a gibbet, dismembered in the most brutal manner, and finally burned.*

At the close of this tragedy the Baron de Vitry received the wages of his brutality, and found himself before sunset a marshal of France: while du Hallier his brother became his successor as captain of the royal guard; and Persan, the husband of his sister, who had also assisted in the massacre of Concini, was recompensed by the lieutenancy of the Bastille, and intrusted with the safe keeping of the Prince de Condé. On the same day it was publicly proclaimed in the streets of Paris that all the relatives and adherents of the Maréchal d'Ancre were forthwith to leave the capital, and that the Sieur de Vitry had acted throughout the late execution by the express command of the King; the ministers who had recently held office under the Queen-mother were dismissed, and those whom she had displaced were restored to power; de Luynes was formally invested with the confiscated property of Concini; and a new govern-

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 396, 397. Richelieu, Book VIII, pp. 420—428. Rohan, Mém., p. 144. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 647—649. Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 139. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 200—202.

ment was organised which had for its leading object the subversion of all previously-concerted measures.*

The death of Concini no sooner became known in the provinces than the Duke de Mayenne resigned Soissons and all the other towns and fortresses throughout his government into the hands of the King. Both parties suspended hostilities; and the royal troops and those of the insurgents drank and feasted together in a general rejoicing. This example was followed by the army in Champagne; and on every side the rebel princes declared their readiness to offer their submission to the King. The moment was a perilous one to de Luynes, but to Louis it afforded only triumph and exultation; and ere long the self-exiled nobles reappeared in the capital, where they were graciously received. On the 12th of May a declaration was registered by the Parliament in which their past offences were pardoned, and they were assured that thenceforward they would be held as good and loyal subjects to the crown; while no single exception was made save in the person of the Prince de Condé, who was still retained a prisoner in the Bastille; and who appeared to be totally forgotten by his former adherents.

Rendered confident by this increase of strength, Louis remained inflexible to the tears and prayers of his mother, and readily suffered himself to be persuaded by those about him that she had, in conjunction with Concini, determined to take his life by poison in order

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 202—204.

to place the Duke d'Anjou upon the throne. In vain did the estimable Marquise de Guercheville throw herself at his feet, and offer the most solemn assurances of the innocence of her unhappy mistress: she was listened to with impatience, and dismissed with an abruptness which left no room for hope.* Meanwhile the captivity of Marie de Medicis became each day more irksome, through the unrestrained insolence of de Vitry, who caused her apartments to be searched by the officers under his command, her chests to be emptied, and even her bed to be displaced. The Queen devoured her mortification, and bore the insult in silence; but Madame de Guercheville could not restrain her indignation, and insisted upon learning the reason for such an outrage.

"I am ordered to ascertain, Madam," was the reply of the individual to whom she addressed herself; "if there be not a cask of powder in these apartments destined to destroy the King who sleeps above."

"Let them obey their orders;" said Marie coldly: "their employers are capable of even more than this."†

As she learnt each successive arrival at court, the unfortunate Princess trusted from day to day that her position would be ameliorated through the influence of some of her former friends; but until the Duke de Rohan reached the capital none of the great nobles appeared to remember her existence. Well might the duke exclaim when he learnt how utterly unfriended she

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iv, p. 63.

† Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 643.

had become in her adversity, "There are few generous and bold enough to cleave to the misfortunes of those whom they honoured in their prosperity."* He was himself, however, one of those noble exceptions; and although he excited the undisguised displeasure of de Luynes, he persisted in demanding the royal sanction to pay his respects to the Queen-mother; an example which was subsequently followed by Bassompierre; who, being unable to obtain the permission which he sought, availed himself of the medium of the Queen's tailor to offer his assurances of devotion and fidelity to her person, through the Duchess de Guise and the Princess de Conti.†

Weary of her utter isolation in a palace of which she had so lately been the undisputed mistress, and where she had received the homage of all by whom she was approached; heart-sick and disgusted by the ingratitude of those whose fortunes had been her own work; and pining for that rest which she could never hope to find amid the persecutions to which she was daily subjected, Marie de Medicis at length resolved to retire to Moulins in the province of Bourbon, which was one of her dower-cities; and she accordingly sent to request the consent of the King to her departure.

This was precisely what de Luynes had hoped; and his exultation was consequently great. Her exile by

* Rohan, Mém., Book 1.

† Bassompierre, Mém., p. 126. Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 653.

the command of her son might have excited a murmur, and he had therefore forborne from advising such a step; but when it could be publicly asserted that the Queen-mother was about to leave the court for a few months by her own express desire, not even those who still remained faithful to her cause would be enabled to resent her absence. Her demand under such circumstances could not fail to prove successful; and it was conceded by Louis himself with the greater facility, that her presence as a prisoner in the Louvre was irksome and painful to a youth whose conscience was not yet totally seared; and who professed, even while exposing her from hour to hour to the insults of his hirelings, to feel towards her "all the sentiments of a good son."

The contemplated retirement of Marie de Medicis from the capital soon became publicly known, and at once decided the measures of Richelieu. He himself informs us that immediately after his cold reception by the King, he dispatched his valet to assure the Queen-mother of his sympathy in her sorrows, and of his anxiety to serve her;* nor could he fail to believe that such an assurance at such a moment had produced the desired effect, unconscious as the unfortunate Marie must necessarily have been of the circumstances which had induced him to feel for her reverses when all the other members of the court were

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, p. 200.

intent only upon winning the good graces of the monarch and his favourite. The time was now come, as he at once saw, to profit by so signal a proof of policy and forethought; and Richelieu was prepared to use it with the craft and cleverness which were destined to shape out his future fortunes. To his active and ambitious spirit a residence in the capital in the character of a deposed minister was impossible; while he equally deprecated the idea of burying himself in his diocese among the marshes of Lower Poitou. He resolved therefore to share the exile of the Queen-mother, and by this display of devotion to gain her confidence; while, at the same time, he communicated his intention to de Luynes in a manner which insured its sanction. Few words were needed. Ere the conference was at an end the favourite was aware that no *safer* person could be admitted to the privacy of Marie de Medicis; while Richelieu had, on his side, been careful to avoid any acknowledgment of the real motive by which he was influenced.*

"You incur no risk by acceding to his request, Sire;" said de Luynes in a subsequent interview with the King; "M. de Luçon will understand how to calm the mind of the Queen-mother, and to advise her as we could wish. He may be the means of establishing a good understanding between you; and even should he fail to do this, it will be easy to compel

* Déageant, Mém., pp. 65, 66.

him to reside in his diocese, or to banish him to a distant province, should your Majesty not be satisfied with his conduct."

"It must not be expected;" gravely observed Richelieu in his turn, while negociating the arrangement; "that I should act as a court-spy when I am admitted to the confidence of the Queen; nor that I should report all which may take place; but to this I will pledge myself; that I will immediately retire to Luçon should she refuse to be guided by my advice, or to adopt any resolutions inimical to the interests of the King."

It would have been unreasonable to require more; and with a thrill of pleasure to which she had been long a stranger, the beguiled Queen learnt that the Bishop of Luçon-Richelieu had received the royal permission to devote himself to her fallen fortunes. This was, indeed, more than she had ever ventured to hope, for she was capable of appreciating to the utmost the talents of the individual who thus, as she fondly believed, sacrificed his own interests to her necessities; and she consequently lost no time in making him the medium of her communications with the King. Before her departure she was anxious to secure such terms as might tend, in some degree, to diminish the bitterness of her exile; and she accordingly availed herself of the services of her new adherent to convey her wishes to Louis. These were that she might be permitted to reside for

some days at Blois, until the castle of Moulins, which had been uninhabited for a considerable time, could be prepared for her reception; that she might be informed of the number and identity of those who would be allowed to follow her in her retreat; that she might retain unlimited authority in the place of her residence; that she should be immediately informed whether it were the pleasure of the King that she should be left in possession of the whole of her revenues, or restricted in her income, in order that she might be prepared to regulate the expenses of her household accordingly; and, finally, that her son would accord her an interview before her departure.

In reply to these demands, Louis, after having conferred with his favourite, replied that had circumstances permitted such a measure, he should not, during the last few days, have deprived himself of the happiness of her society, of which he had deeply felt the privation; but that since it was her wish to retire from the court, she was at perfect liberty to reside at Moulins, or in any other city which she thought proper to select, and to include in her suite all the individuals whom she might be desirous to retain about her person: that she was fully authorised to exert the most absolute authority, not only in the city, but throughout the province in which it was situated; and that so far from seeking to diminish her resources, although they greatly exceeded those of any previous dowager-Queen

of France,* he would willingly augment them should she deem it necessary, even to his own inconvenience; while as regarded her desire for a parting interview, he could not, on his side, suffer her to leave the capital without assuring her in his own person of his anxiety for her happiness.†

Despite these professions, however, it was agreed on both sides that each party should previously arrange, and submit to the other, the substance of all that was to pass between them; and in consequence of this extraordinary arrangement, Richelieu was intrusted by the Queen-mother to compose her address to the King, which having been submitted to the council and approved, the reply of Louis was in like manner prepared by the ministers. A flight of stairs alone separated the mother and the son: the footstep of the stripling monarch could be heard in the apartment of Marie as he passed from one room to the other; and were not the subject too sad for ridicule, it would be difficult to suppress a smile at these puerile and undignified formalities. No political negociation was ever conducted, however, with more mutual circumspection and distrust; every detail of the interview was regulated beforehand; the two principal actors pledged themselves to say no more than was set down for them; and each committed to memory the harangue

* The dower of the widowed Queens of France was twelve hundred thousand annual livres.

† Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 140, 141. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 655, 656. Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 403.

which was to be pronounced. The princesses were to pay their parting respects to the Queen-mother so soon as she should have assumed her travelling-dress, but the nobles and officers of the court were only to be permitted to salute her after she had taken leave of the King; a privilege from which, at her express request, de Vitry and his brother were, however, excluded.

On the 4th of May, the day fixed for her departure from the capital, Marie caused her ladies to dress her with extraordinary care, but at the same time with extreme simplicity; the slighted mother and the humbled Queen yet entertained a hope that the sight of her mourning attire and subdued deportment might produce their effect upon her son; and as, at the appointed hour, she left her chamber, and with words of gratitude and affection joined her attendants, there was a faint smile upon her lips, and a tremulous light in her dark eyes which betrayed her secret trust. The members of her household were assembled in one of those noble saloons which were enriched by the grand creations of Jean Goujon,* and the magnificent tapestried hangings that

* Jean Goujon, a celebrated architect and sculptor, who was surnamed the Correggio of sculpture from the grace and beauty of his productions. The finest of his statues was the Hunting Diana, which long formed one of the treasures of Malmaison. The Fountain of the Innocents, the bas-reliefs of the Hôtel de Carnavalet, and those of the Louvre, were alike the monuments of his genius. He was occupied in terminating the latter when he was killed by the ball of a carabine during the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

were subsequently destroyed during the revolution; they were grouped together near the door by which she entered; and, despite every effort which she made to overcome her emotion, Marie de Medicis could not suppress a sigh as she marked how small a space they occupied in that vast apartment which had so lately been thronged with princes and nobles, all professedly devoted to her cause. Suddenly, as she was exchanging a few words with the Marquise de Guercheville, the royal body-guards appeared upon the threshold; and a page, advancing one step into the saloon announced—"The King!"

At the same instant Louis XIII. appeared, with the Duke d'Anjou on his right hand, leaning upon his favourite, preceded by Cadenet and Brantes, and followed by the Prince de Joinville and Bassompierre. As he entered the Queen-mother rose and curtsied profoundly, while the ladies and gentlemen of her household imitated her example, as they retired a pace or two behind her. Hitherto the Queen-mother had exhibited the most perfect composure, but she no sooner found herself once more in the presence of her son than she burst into a passionate flood of tears, which she attempted to conceal as she approached him by spreading her fan before her face. Louis moved forward in his turn, still clinging to de Luynes, but no trace of emotion was visible in his countenance, which was cold, and almost careless in its expression.

"Sir;" said the unhappy Queen so soon as she

had recovered her composure; "the tender care with which I watched over your youth, the efforts which I made for the preservation of your kingdom, the dangers which I braved, and which I might have avoided had I been induced to hazard the safety of your crown, will justify me before God, and prove that I have never had any other view than that of securing your welfare. I have repeatedly entreated that you would be pleased to take the reins of government into your own hands, and relieve me from so heavy a responsibility, but you considered my services to be necessary, and commanded their continuance. I have obeyed you, both because I was bound to respect your will, and because I felt that it would have been cowardly to abandon you when you were threatened with danger.* If I have failed to meet your wishes, or have contravened them, I can only entreat of you to pardon me; and to believe that had you explained your pleasure it should have been fulfilled. I rejoice that you are now about to govern your kingdom in your own person; and I pray God to grant you every prosperity. I thank you for the concessions which you have made; and I trust that you will henceforward act towards me like a good son and a good sovereign; while I, on my side, pledge myself that I shall ever continue to be your very humble and very obedient mother and servant."

"Madam;" replied Louis in a cold and constrained

* Richelieu, Unpublished MSS.

tone, while the Queen was still struggling to suppress her tears; "I am convinced that you have always acted with the greatest zeal and affection. I am perfectly satisfied, and beg to thank you. You have expressed a wish to retire to Blois, and I have consented to that wish. Had you remained near me you should still have retained that share in the government which you have so long held; and you are still at liberty to do so, whenever you may desire it. Rest assured that I shall never fail to love, honour, and obey you as my mother upon every occasion; and that I shall continue throughout my life to be your very humble son."

This notable oration had been delivered by the young King with all the monotonous intonations of a studied recitation, and was terminated by a sigh of relief, as he saw himself near the conclusion of the comedy. It had been arranged that so soon as he ceased speaking, the Queen should stoop forward to embrace him; but in the excess of her agitation, the outraged mother disregarded the instructions which she had previously received, and in an accent of heart-broken anguish, she exclaimed: "I am about to leave you, Sir; do not deny my last prayer. Release my faithful Barbin, and suffer him to share my exile."

Louis, unprepared for this request, was uncertain how he should reply, and glanced uneasily from de Luynes to Richelieu.

"Do not refuse me this, Sir;" urged Marie once more; "it is the only boon I ask—perhaps," she added

after a moment's pause, "the last I shall ever ask of you."

Still Louis remained silent, with his cold stern eyes rivetted upon her agitated countenance.

The unfortunate Queen could not mistake the meaning of that fixed and passionless look: her lip quivered for an instant, and then she bent her stately head, and slightly touched the forehead of her son. Louis replied to the embrace by a profound and silent bow, and turned away hurriedly, as if weary of the scene in which he had played so undignified a part. As he moved aside, de Luynes approached the Queen-mother; and having bent his knee, and kissed the hem of her robe, he uttered a few words in so low a voice that they were inaudible to those who stood behind her. In reply she was overheard to say that she had solicited his Majesty to allow Barbin to follow her to Blois, and to continue his duties as superintendent of her household; and that she should consider herself greatly indebted to the kindness of the favourite if he would exert his influence to that effect. De Luynes was about once more to speak, when the voice of the King was heard loudly calling for him; and pretexting the impossibility of compelling his Majesty to wait, he once more bowed to the ground, and made his retreat.

When she saw him disappear in the crowd, Marie de Medicis gave free vent to the emotion which she had so long partially controlled; and as the other great nobles of the court successively bent before her, she remained

with her face buried in her handkerchief, sobbing audibly, and apparently unconscious of their homage. Ten minutes afterwards she descended the great staircase, and took her seat in the coach which was to convey her to Blois, accompanied by the princesses, and all the principal ladies of the court, who were to attend her to the city gates. An immense crowd had collected on the quay of the Louvre to see her pass; but, contrary to the apprehensions of her friends, not a word of insult or reproach was uttered. There was something so appalling even to the most reckless in her sudden fall; something so sad in this gorgeous procession which seemed rather to mock than to honour her misfortunes; so sharp and bitter a lesson in the spectacle of a Princess lately all-powerful, thus driven from her palace-home to immure herself in a fortress, and this too in broad daylight, under the eyes of her subjects, and in the streets of the capital, that she excited the involuntary sympathy even of her enemies.

This sympathy was, however, unfelt by her son; who no sooner became aware that she was about to enter her carriage than he hurried to the balcony of the Queen's apartment, whence he attentively watched the departure of the *cortège*, manifesting the most lively interest in the preliminary arrangements; and as the last equipage disappeared, he returned to the room saying gaily: "Now then, gentlemen, we will start for Vincennes."

Some minutes afterwards, the palace resounded with the voices of ushers, pages, and men-at-arms; a dozen

carriages rolled into the court; the King paid a farewell visit to his dogs, his birds, and his wife; and then, desiring that the Queen and her ladies should follow him on the morrow, he left orders that the Louvre should be minutely searched throughout, in order to ascertain beyond all possibility of doubt that no gunpowder had been concealed within the edifice for the purpose of effecting his destruction; after which he sprang into his coach, with an undisguised cheerfulness which left no doubt that his affected respect and attachment for his mother were by no means incompatible with a hearty sense of relief at his emancipation from her control.*

The Maréchale d'Ancre had been committed to the Bastille on the 29th of April, lightly dressed, despoiled of all her ornaments, and without the most trifling pecuniary resource; so thoroughly destitute, indeed, of the common necessaries of life that she was indebted to Madame Persan, the wife of the lieutenant of the fortress, for a couple of changes of body-linen. Even the Prince de Condé, who was professedly her enemy, was deeply moved when he ascertained her pitiable condition. "It was not to Leonora that political crimes should be attributed;" he said, with an indignation which did honour to his heart; "but to the insatiable ambition of her husband."

Her only attendants were an Italian maid and her

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 398—404. Bassompierre, Mém., pp. 126, 127. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 653—659. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 137—142. Brienne, Mém., vol. i, pp. 327—329.

apothecary, whose constant care was required from the precarious state both of her bodily and mental health; but nevertheless she maintained a self-command and composure which astonished all by whom she was approached. She uttered no complaint; exhibited no resentment; and in reply to the condolences of her gaolers, simply replied: "I must have patience; my enemies are powerful, the Queen-mother is absent, and no doubt I shall be compelled to leave France. I will retire with my son to Florence; we have still the means of subsistence, and I must endeavour to forget the past."

Some days subsequently her women succeeded in conveying to her a few changes of apparel and two hundred crowns in money; but when, on the 11th of May, she was transferred to the prison of the Conciergerie, these effects were in their turn stolen from her, and she once more found herself totally penniless. In addition to this misfortune she was apprised that she could no longer be permitted to retain her attendants, as the regulations of a felon prison did not admit of such an indulgence; and on hearing this, she said in an accent of agony: "I am lost!"

The court remained a fortnight at Vincennes, after which the King returned to the Louvre; where, instead of endeavouring, according to the sage advice of his ministers, to render the absence of his mother unfelt by the adoption of measures calculated to prove that he was equal to the responsibility which he had been so eager to assume, he soon returned to the puerile amuse-

ments he had latterly affected to despise; and spent the day in colouring prints, beating a drum, blowing a bugle, or making *jets d'eau* with quills.* On one occasion when Bassompierre was complimenting him upon the facility with which he acquired everything that he desired to learn, he replied with great complacency: "I must begin again with my hunting-horn, which I blow very well; and I will practise for a whole day."

"Be careful, Sire;" was the reply of the courtier; "I would not advise your Majesty to indulge too much in such a diversion, as it is injurious to the chest; and I have even heard it asserted that the late King Charles IX. burst a blood-vessel on the lungs from his abuse of that instrument; an accident which terminated his life."

"You are wrong, Sir;" said Louis with one of his cold saturnine looks; "it was his quarrel with Catherine de Medicis which caused his death. If he had not followed the bad advice of the Maréchal de Retz, and resided with her subsequently at Monceaux, he would not have died so young."

Bassompierre was silenced; and thenceforward resolved never again to mention the name of the Queen-mother in the presence of his royal master.†

Meanwhile it was universally anticipated that as all the other princes had been restored to favour, M. de Condé would be liberated; but such a measure by no means accorded with the views of de Luynes, who, aware

* Rohan, Mém., Book 1. Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 659.

† Bassompierre, Mém., p. 128.

of the influence of the noble prisoner, felt himself too weak to cope openly with the first prince of the blood; and, consequently, the only benefit which Condé derived from the death of the Maréchal d'Ancre was a mitigation of the extreme vigilance with which he had hitherto been guarded. The conduct of the Princess his wife was at this juncture above all praise. She had, from the first period of his imprisonment, been persevering in her efforts to accomplish his liberation; and having failed to do this, had solicited the permission of the King to share his captivity; but, by the advice of his favourite, Louis had hitherto resolutely refused to accede to such an arrangement; although he might justly have been struck by the heroism of a sacrifice which in her case was heightened tenfold by the fact that despite the jealousy which he had constantly exhibited, M. de Condé had made no secret of the fact that he was utterly indifferent to his wife, and would never forgive her relations with Henry IV. After the departure of the Queen-mother, however, de Luynes judged it expedient to accept the offer of the Princess; and she was accordingly informed that she might proceed to the Louvre, where the King would grant her an audience. She had no sooner received this permission than she hastened, accompanied by the Duchess d'Angoulême her sister, to throw herself at the feet of the young sovereign; where, bathed in tears, she sobbed out her acknowledgment of the indulgence extended to her, and implored him to extend his clemency to the Prince her husband.

"But should you unhappily consider it expedient to detain him in the Bastille, Sire;" she concluded with deep emotion; "I entreat of your Majesty to allow me to share his prison."

"Madam;" replied Louis; "it was already my intention so to do. I am sincerely attached to M. de Condé, and to all his house; and every attention shall be paid to him until my government is perfectly established. I greatly regret that at the present moment I am prevented by circumstances from restoring him to liberty; but assure him from me that I will cause his liberation at the earliest opportunity."

Again and again did the delighted Princess utter her thanks; and after having been graciously dismissed by the King, she lost not a moment in proceeding, armed with the royal authority, to the Bastille, where, having constituted herself a prisoner, she hastened to impart her happy and hopeful tidings to the Prince.

Despite the assurances which she had received, however, from the lips of Louis himself, four more weary months were passed by M. and Madame de Condé in the fortress, in that daily and hourly fever of expectation which is more agonising than utter despair; and even at the close of that dreary time, instead of the liberty for which the husband and wife alike panted, an order arrived at the Bastille for the transfer of the deceived and unhappy couple to the Castle of Vincennes, which was communicated to them as a signal

mark of the royal clemency; and in that citadel they were detained until the autumn of 1619.* The result of Madame de Condé's admirable self-abnegation was, however, a source of triumph to her woman-heart, as the Prince was not proof against so unequivocal a demonstration of attachment, and thenceforward evinced towards her a tenderness which amply repaid her sacrifice.

Shortly after the transfer of Madame d'Ancre to the Conciergerie she was put upon her trial; and as her mental hallucination, together with her estrangement from her husband, rendered it probable that sufficient proof of political delinquency could not be adduced against her to justify an extreme sentence, and that her escape from the scaffold must necessarily tend to render his tenure of the confiscated property of Concini (of which he had already obtained the reversion) difficult, if not impossible, de Luynes did not hesitate to tamper with her judges, and to induce them, alike by bribes and threats, to accomplish her death. For this purpose a second charge was coupled with that of *lèse-majesté*, which was brought conjointly against herself and her murdered husband. She was accused of sorcery as well as of conspiring against the state; of casting alike nativities to compass the destruction of the King, and cannon for the service of the disaffected princes; together

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 666. Relation de la mort du Maréchal d'Ancre. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 142, 143. Dreux du Radier, vol. vi, pp. 123, 124. Brienne, Mém., vol. i, p. 333.

with a host of other crimes none of which could be proved against her. So palpable, indeed, was the motive of her persecutors, that it excited the popular indignation; and the mass, who had so recently execrated the name of the unfortunate woman, began, ere the conclusion of her trial, to look upon her only as the victim of de Luynes. "You will see," said some of the citizens, as they learnt with what dignified calmness and logical precision she refuted the several charges brought against her; "that here the case of the Duke de Biron will be reversed—like her he was the victim of policy, but he died like a woman, while she will meet her fate like a man."

And they were correct in their conclusion. Whatever might have been her faults while she continued the favourite of fortune, Leonora Galigaï was grand in her adversity; and one of her judges was so much overpowered by his conviction of her innocence, that on recollecting the pledge which he had given to de Luynes to decide upon her guilt, he fainted, and was carried from the court. When accused of treason against the state, the prisoner replied by reminding her accusers of her total estrangement from her husband during the last two years, throughout which period he had been all-powerful with the Queen-mother, and her own consequent loss of influence; and when questioned as to the nature of the sorcery by which she had so long governed her royal mistress, she answered that it was simply the magic exercised by a strong mind over a

weak one.* To the other charges she responded with equal composure and conclusiveness; and many among them were of so puerile a character that, despite the fearful position in which she was placed, she could not suppress a smile of mingled pity and amusement.

She was foredoomed, however; and on the 8th of July the sentence was pronounced. It was in truth a frightful one! Both the husband and the wife were declared guilty of *lèse-majesté* divine and human; and she herself was condemned to lose her head, and to be afterwards burned; their house was to be levelled with the ground; their property, not only in France, but also all that they possessed at Rome and Florence, was to be confiscated to the crown; and their son deprived of his rank, and rendered incapable of holding any office in the kingdom.†

When this sentence was declared, the wretched woman, who had never anticipated a more severe fate than exile, exclaimed in a piteous voice: "Oimè poveretta!" but shortly recovering herself, she resumed the same calm courage which she had previously evinced.

Perhaps the most merciful portion of her sentence

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 407, 408. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 667—672. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 223—230.

† This incapacity to hold office under the French government was, moreover, on this occasion, declared thenceforward to extend to all individuals who were natives of other countries; and an attempt was made thirty years subsequently to render it applicable to the Cardinal Mazarin.

was that which condemned her to suffer on the same day; and for this she was undoubtedly indebted to the impatience of de Luynes, who did not feel himself secure of the succession until she should have ceased to breathe. The revelations which she had made of the extent of her wealth during the preliminary examinations in the prison had sealed her fate, as they so far exceeded all his anticipations that they silenced every throb of compunction, and negatived every other feeling; and they thus at least spared her a night of agony during which she might have brooded over the miserable prospects of her idolised son.

It is painful to reflect upon the position which the marquise had filled, and to see her thus shaken and withered both in mind and body; abandoned by the protectress to whom she had clung so long and so confidingly; widowed by violence; separated from her only surviving child; and compelled to drain her cup of bitterness to the very dregs. Not a pang was, however, voluntarily spared to her. She might, in consideration of her rank as the wife of a marshal of France, and out of respect for the Queen-mother, of whom she had not only been the foster-sister, but also the familiar friend, have been conveyed to the place of execution in a covered carriage, and thus have been in some degree screened from the public gaze; but no such delicacy was observed. The condemned cart, with its ghastly faggot for a seat, was her ordained conveyance; but her step did not falter as she ascended the vehicle which had

been previously tenanted by the vilest and most degraded criminals. Never had there been seen so dense a crowd in the Place de Grève; and as she glanced hurriedly around, unaware of the popular reaction of feeling, she cowered for an instant panic-struck, and murmured helplessly: "Oh, what a multitude to gaze upon a miserable woman!"

Not a word, not a gesture of vengeance or of hate, escaped, however, from the populace. Her deportment had been so dignified, her courage so great, her piety so perfect, that those who were once her bitterest enemies, looked on her through their tears. Her charities had been unremitting and extensive; and those whom she had aided in their necessities, had thronged, through a morbid and mingled feeling of gratitude and awe to see her die.*

Her head fell—her body was burned—and her ashes were scattered to the wind.

De Luynes had, as we have stated, constituted himself her heir; but it was not without difficulty that he succeeded in appropriating the principal portion of the coveted wealth of his victims. Du Vair, with a firmness for which the favourite was not prepared, refused for a considerable time to countersign the letters of consignment which had been granted by the King to that effect; declaring that as the property of Concini and his family had been confiscated to the crown, it could not be otherwise disposed of. This difficulty was

* Bernard, Book III.

however, surmounted after the fashion of the period; and the signature of the scrupulous minister was purchased by the rich bishopric of Lisieux; after which de Luynes of himself negatived the destruction of the magnificent hôtel of the maréchal, to which he transferred his own establishment; and then proceeded to enforce his claims upon the funded property in Rome. This pretension was, however, opposed by the Pope, who declared that all monies confiscated within the Roman states must necessarily revert to himself; and Louis XIII., after having in vain endeavoured to induce the Sovereign-Pontiff to rescind this declaration, found himself ultimately compelled to make a donation of the five hundred thousand francs claimed by his favourite, to the cathedral of St. Peter's.

The Grand-Duke of Tuscany, in his turn, refused to recognise the right of de Luynes to the funds which had been intrusted to him by the Maréchal d'Ancre, but from a higher and a holier motive; as the young Count de la Péna was no sooner set at liberty, with an injunction immediately to leave France, than he received him with all the sympathy due to his unmerited misfortunes, and put him in possession of this remnant of his inheritance. Thenceforward the son of Concini remained in Italy until the year 1631, when he fell a victim to the plague.*

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 410, 411. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 674, 675.

Before we quit the court to follow exclusively the fortunes of Marie de Medicis, it is necessary that we should record three circumstances of social interest which occurred during the year 1617. The first in order is the death of the President de Thou, one of the most able and upright ministers, and, perhaps, the most conscientious historian, that France had ever known. He expired on the 7th of May. The next, in point of chronology, is the marriage of de Luynes; who—having obtained the most absolute power, not only over the King personally, but also over all state affairs—being anxious to strengthen his position yet more by a great alliance, after having for a time contemplated an union with the daughter of the Duke de Vendôme, ultimately entered into a negociation for the hand of Mademoiselle de Montbazon.* This negociation proved successful; and through her means he became closely connected with the most ancient and powerful families in the kingdom. The marriage took place on the 13th of September, and the bride was admitted to the honours of the *tabouret*;† while in order to render him more acceptable to the

* Marie de Rohan-Montbazon was the daughter of Hercule de Rohan, Duke de Montbazon, and of his first wife, Madeleine de Lenoncourt. After the death of the Constable de Luynes, she married Claude de Lorraine, Duke de Chevreuse, and became celebrated towards the close of the reign of Louis XIII., and during the minority of his successor, for her wit, her beauty, her profligacy, and her political intrigues. She died at a very advanced age in the year 1679.

† Brienne, Mém., vol. i, p. 333.

haughty houses into which the favour of his sovereign had thus afforded him ingress, the exulting favourite was elevated to a duchy-peerage, and took his seat in the Parliament. The last circumstance to which allusion has been made, is the death of M. de Villeroy, who terminated his life at the ripe age of seventy-four years on the 30th of December. As we have already stated, he was possessed of little education, had no taste for either literature or art, but was singularly upright and shrewd in the management of public business; while he was, moreover, so thoroughly disinterested, that in the midst of all the cupidity which at that period disgraced the court of France, after having been fifty-one years in office, he died with the mere addition of two thousand annual livres to his patrimonial income.*

In order to enlist the popular opinion in his favour, de Luynes had, as we have seen, induced the King to recal the old ministers to power; and the people, still remembering the wisdom which they had displayed during their administration, welcomed with joy the reappearance of Sillery, Villeroy, and Jeannin in the council; but although the favourite ostensibly recognised their privileges, he was far from intending to permit their interference with his own interests;† and so thoroughly did he enslave the mind of the young King, that while Louis, like a schoolboy who had played truant, and who was resolved

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 675. Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 430, 431.
† D'Hericourt, vol. i, p. 529.

to enjoy his new-found liberty to the uttermost, was constantly changing his place of abode, and visiting in turn St. Germain, Fontainebleau, Villers-Cotterets, and Monceaux, without one care save the mere amusement of the hour, de Luynes was multiplying his precautions to prevent a reconciliation between the mother and the son; an event which must, as he believed, whenever it should occur, prove the ruin of his own fortunes. For this purpose, so soon as he saw a cloud upon the brow of the royal stripling, he hastened to devise for him some new and exciting pursuit, which might tend to deaden his remorse for the past, and to render him more conscious of the value of that moral emancipation which he had purchased at so fearful a price; but ere long even this subtle policy failed to dissipate the apprehensions of the favourite. Like all persons who occupy a false position of which they fully appreciate the uncertain tenure, he became suspicious of all around him; and would not allow any individual, whatever might be his rank, to approach the King without his knowledge, nor to attempt to converse with him in private. Thus, therefore, while Louis fondly believed that he had indeed become a monarch in fact as well as name, he was in reality more enslaved than ever.

Enriched by the spoils of Concini and his wife, de Luynes next caused himself to be appointed lieutenant of the King in Normandy; and this was no sooner done than he entered into a negociation for one of the principal governments in the kingdom. He appeared

suddenly to have forgotten that one of the most cogent reasons which he had so lately given for the necessity of sacrificing the Maréchal d'Ancre and his wife was the enormous wealth of which they had possessed themselves at the expense of the state. His ambition as well as his avarice became insatiable; and not contented with pushing his own fortunes to a height never before attained by a mere petty noble, he procured great advantages for his brothers, and lodged them in his apartments in the Louvre. But while Louis remained unconscious or careless of the new bondage into which he had thus fallen, the courtiers and the people were alike less blind and less forbearing. With that reckless light-heartedness which has enabled the French in all ages to find cause for mirth even in their misfortunes, some wag, less scrupulous than inventive, on one occasion under cover of the darkness affixed above the door leading to the rooms occupied by the brothers, a painting which represented the adoration of the Magi; beneath which was printed in bold letters: "At the sign of the Three Kings;" a practical jest which afforded great amusement to the court.*

At this period Louis XIII., still a mere youth, and utterly inexperienced in those great questions of public policy which determine the prosperity or the peril of a nation, resolved upon a measure which Henry IV. himself had not ventured to undertake. The

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 678.

Roman Catholic religion had been abolished in Bearn by Jeanne d'Albret, his grandmother, and the property of that church seized by virtue of an act passed at the assembly of the States; and now, on the demand of his clergy, he determined to issue a decree ordaining the restitution of all the ecclesiastical property, and the re-establishment of the Roman faith. This was, of course, resisted by the Protestants, as well as the annexation of the principality of Bearn to the crown of France; but the advisers of the young King considered the opportunity to be a favourable one for effecting both measures; and they easily persuaded him to persevere in his purpose. The edict was consequently published; and its effects were destined to be painfully felt by the reformed party throughout the remainder of his reign.

The people, on their side, had not forgotten the promises which they had received of a reform in the government; and de Luynes still continued to give them hopes of their accomplishment; but as no measures to that effect were taken they, at this period, demanded a new assembly of the States-General. They were, however, induced to modify this demand; and a meeting of the *Notables** was finally conceded, which was to take place at Rouen on the 24th of November, in the presence of the sovereign. This assembly was accordingly held;

* By the *Notables* was understood a body of the most eminent individuals among the nobles, the clergy, and the law-officers; and as these were chosen by the ministers themselves, such an assembly could excite no apprehension in the court-party.

but by the influence of de Luynes produced none of the results which had been anticipated.*

A few days before the departure of Marie de Medicis from Paris, the King of Spain declared war against the Duke of Savoy, who immediately appealed to France for aid, which was in the first instance refused; but on the representations of the Maréchal de Lesdiguières, it was finally accorded; and troops were raised which proceeded to Piedmont under the command of that general.†

Such was the general physiognomy of the court and kingdom of France at the close of the year 1617; of which we have considered it necessary to sketch the principal features, in order to remind the reader of the exact position of the country at the period of the Queen-mother's exile. Henceforward, we shall principally confine ourselves to following her in her banishment.

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 144, 145.

† Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 331.

BOOK III.

MARIE DE MEDICIS AS EXILE.

CHAPTER I.

[1618.]

DE LUYNES RESOLVES TO COMPEL THE QUEEN-MOTHER TO REMAIN AT BLOIS—TREACHERY OF RICHELIEU—THE SUSPICIONS OF MARIE ARE AROUSED — HER APPREHENSIONS — SHE DEMANDS PERMISSION TO REMOVE TO MONCEAUX, AND IS REFUSED—SHE AFFECTS TO RESIGN HERSELF TO HER FATE—A ROYAL CORRESPONDENCE—VANITY OF THE DUKE D'EPERNON—A COURT BROIL—THE ABBÉ RUCELLAÏ OFFERS HIS SERVICES TO MARIE DE MEDICIS—HE ATTEMPTS TO WIN OVER THE GREAT NOBLES TO HER CAUSE — HE IS COMPELLED TO QUIT THE COURT, AND RETIRES TO SEDAN—THE DUKE DE BOUILLON REFUSES TO JOIN THE CABAL — THE DUKE D'EPERNON CONSENTS TO AID THE ESCAPE OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—THE MINISTERS BECOME SUSPICIOUS OF THE DESIGNS OF RICHELIEU—HE IS ORDERED TO RETIRE TO COUSSAY, AND SUBSEQUENTLY TO AVIGNON—TYRANNY OF M. DE ROISSY—THE QUEEN-MOTHER RESOLVES TO DEMAND A PUBLIC TRIAL—DE LUYNES AFFECTS TO SEEK A RECONCILIATION WITH THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ—FIRMNESS OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—THE THREE JESUITS—MARIE PLEDGES HERSELF NOT TO LEAVE BLOIS WITHOUT THE SANCTION OF THE KING—FALSE CONFIDENCE OF DE LUYNES—THE MALCONTENTS ARE BROUGHT TO TRIAL—WEAKNESS OF THE MINISTERS—POLITICAL EXECUTIONS—INDIGNATION OF THE PEOPLE—THE PRINCES RESOLVE TO LIBERATE THE QUEEN-MOTHER.

CHAPTER I.

[1618.]

It will be remembered that Marie de Medicis left the capital under a pledge from her son himself that she was at perfect liberty to change her place of abode whenever she should deem it expedient to do so; and that her sojourn at Blois was merely provisional, and intended as a temporary measure, to enable her to establish herself more commodiously in her own castle of Monceaux. Anxious for her absence, de Luynes had induced the King to consent to her wishes; but she had no sooner reached Blois than he determined that she should be compelled to remain there, as he dreaded her influence in a province of which she was the absolute mistress; and, accordingly, she had no sooner arrived in the fortress-palace of the Loire than he began to adopt the necessary measures for her detention. Within a week she was surrounded by spies; a precaution which would appear to have been supererogatory so long as Richelieu remained about her

person, as his first care on reaching Blois was to write to the favourite to repeat his offers of service; and he himself informs us that "from time to time he sent him an exact account of the Queen's proceedings;" while so much anxiety did he evince to retain the confidence of the court-party that when Marie, desirous to repay the sacrifice which she believed him to have made in following her fortunes, appointed him chief of her council, he refused to accept this office until he had written to obtain the sanction of the King; and publicly declared that he would not occupy any official situation whatever in her service until he ascertained the pleasure of his Majesty.

These servile scruples did not, however, as he himself admits, suffice to tranquillise the suspicions of de Luynes, whose knowledge of the bishop's character by no means tended to inspire him with any confidence in his professions;* while the Queen-mother, on her side, had soon cause to apprehend that the motives of Richelieu for his self-banishment were far less honourable than those which she had been so eager to attribute to him. Certain projects which she was anxious to keep profoundly secret became known to the favourite; and her natural distrust, coupled with this fact, induced her to be gradually less communicative to the intriguing prelate. Her spirits, moreover, gave way under the successive mortifications to which she was subjected; and, combined with her somewhat

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 248, 249.

tardy but deep regret at the fate of the Maréchal d'Ancre, were fears for her own safety which appeared to be daily threatened.

Her residence at Monceaux was soon in readiness for her reception; but when she apprised the King of her intention to remove thither, she received an evasive reply, and was courteously but peremptorily advised to defer her journey. Marie de Medicis from that moment fully comprehended her real position; but with a tact and dissimulation equal to that of Louis himself, she professed the most perfect indifference on the subject, and submitted without any remonstrance to the expressed wish of her son. This resignation to his will flattered the vanity of Louis, and quieted the fears of his favourite; but it by no means deceived the subtle Richelieu; who, aware of the inherent ambition of Marie de Medicis, at once felt convinced that she was pre-occupied by some important design, and consequently indisposed to waste her energies upon questions of minor moment. At short intervals she addressed the most submissive letters to the King, assuring him of her devoted attachment to his interests, and her desire to obey his wishes in all things; but these assurances produced no effect upon the mind of Louis, whose ear was perpetually poisoned by the reports which reached him through the creatures of de Luynes, who never failed to attribute to the cabals of the Queen-mother all the court intrigues, whatever might be their origin or character.

Like herself, however, he was profuse in his professions of regard and confidence in her affection for his person and zeal for his interests, at the very time when she could not stir a yard from the fortress, or even walk upon the ramparts, without being accompanied by a number of armed men, denominated by de Luynes, with melancholy facetiousness, a guard of honour. Nevertheless Marie retained the most perfect self-command; but she was fated to undergo a still more bitter trial than she had yet anticipated; for so little real respect did her son evince towards her that he entered into a negociation for the marriage of his sister the Princess Christine with the Prince of Piedmont without condescending to consult her wishes upon the subject; thus at once disregarding her privileges as a mother and as a Queen.*

Superadded to this mortification was a second little less poignant. As the great nobles whom she had helped to enrich during her period of power resumed their position at court, she anticipated from day to day that they would espouse her cause, and advocate her recal to the capital; but with the single exception of the Duke de Rohan, not one of the princes had made an effort in her behalf; and the generous interference of the latter had, as she was aware, excited against him the animosity of de Luynes; while, on the contrary, the favourite showed undisguised favour to all who abandoned her cause.

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 434.

At the close of the year 1617, the Duke de Rohan had proceeded to Savoy, and the Duke de Bouillon to Sedan; but the Dukes of Sully and Epernon still remained in the capital, where the latter again displayed as much pomp and pretension as he had done under the regency; and at the commencement of 1618, he had a serious misunderstanding with du Vair, the keeper of the seals, upon a point of precedence. Irascible and haughty, he resented the fact of that magistrate taking his place on all occasions of public ceremonial immediately after the Chancellor Sillery, and consequently before the dukes and peers; and on Easter Sunday, when the court attended the mass at the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois in state, he seized him roughly by the arm, and compelled him to give way. The King, indignant at so ill-timed a burst of passion, hastened to interfere, and spoke sharply to the duke, who did not condescend to justify himself, but assumed an attitude of defiance, never subsequently leaving his hôtel without the attendance of a numerous suite of gentlemen ready to defend him in case of attack; while in addition to this quarrel of etiquette, M. d'Epernon loudly complained of the bad faith of de Luynes, who had promised, in order to induce him to return to court, to obtain a cardinal's hat for his third son the Archbishop of Toulouse, without, however, having subsequently made a single effort to redeem his pledge. So bitterly, indeed, did he inveigh against the favourite that he began to apprehend the possibility of an arrest; yet

still he lingered in the capital, as if unwilling to retreat before an enemy whom he despised.*

Among the individuals who had followed the Queen-mother into exile was a certain Abbé Rucellaï, a Florentine, who having failed to obtain advancement at the court of Rome, had passed over to France in the hope of furthering his fortunes in that kingdom. His anticipations appeared for a time likely to be realised, as he was warmly welcomed on his arrival by his countryman Concini; but the assassination of the favourite having blighted all his prospects, he resolved upon revenge, and as a first step offered his services to Marie de Medicis, by whom they were accepted. The Queen-mother had no sooner formed her little court than the abbé proceeded to lay the foundations of his plot, which was based upon her return to power, and which he was well aware must involve the ruin of de Luynes; while at the same time he felt satisfied that he should be amply recompensed by Marie herself for his services.† No opposition had been made to the self-banishment of Rucellaï by the court-party, as he was well known to be in infirm health and of effeminate habits; and to exhibit in every phase of his character the very reverse of a conspirator. He had, moreover, made friends during his residence in Paris; and, through

* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 148. Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 7. Rohan, Mém., p. 153. Bassompierre, Mém., pp. 127, 128. Brienne, Mém., vol. i, pp. 334, 335.

† Vie du Duc d'Epernon, Book VII.

the interest of Zamet, had obtained the Abbey of Signy in Champagne, which, together with his family inheritance, secured to him an annual income of twenty thousand crowns. This revenue he spent in the most liberal manner, and soon became very popular from the suavity and refinement of his manners, and his extreme generosity. An affair of gallantry had, however, involved him in a quarrel with the nephew of the Duke d'Epernon; who, espousing the cause of his relative, in his turn excited the hatred of the abbé.*

Rucellaï had been but a short time at Blois before he felt that he could carry out his plans with greater facility in the capital than while subjected to the constant surveillance of the court-spies by whom Marie de Medicis was surrounded; and he accordingly obtained permission to return to court, de Luynes being easily induced to believe that his application was caused by his weariness of the monotony of Blois, and his desire to participate once more in the gaieties of Paris. The fact, however, was far otherwise. The thirst of vengeance had produced a singular effect upon the Florentine; and although he still affected to enact the sybarite, in order to mislead those whom he sought to ruin, he became suddenly invested with a moral energy as well as a physical strength, of which no one had believed him to be possessed. Neither fatigue, danger, nor difficulty sufficed to paralyse his exertions;

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iv, p. 567.

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and if he was one hour at the feet of a court beauty, he was busied the next in the most subtle and well-devised attempts to win over one or other of the great nobles to the cause of the exiled Queen.*

He experienced little difficulty in his undertaking; all the princes desiring the ruin of de Luynes, and the return of the Queen-mother; but when he urged that an endeavour should be made to effect her escape, to secure her safety in a fortified town, and then to take up arms against the favourite, he failed in finding one individual bold enough to venture on so extreme a step, although all were ready to volunteer their support when her evasion should have been accomplished. In this extremity Rucellaï cast his eyes upon the Duke de Bouillon, whose courage was undoubted, and upon whose spirit of intrigue he calculated with confidence;† but in order to win over the marshal it was necessary that he should communicate with him personally, and he accordingly caused rumours to be spread, which, while they excited the apprehensions of the ministers, totally misled them as to his real designs, while at the same time they induced de Luynes to issue an order for his immediate departure from the capital. The abbé complied with apparent reluctance; and then lost no time in hastening to Signy, whence he proceeded with all speed to Sedan.‡

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 128.

† Rohan, Mém., Book I. Vie du Duc d'Epernon, Book VII.

‡ Bassompierre, Mém., p. 129.

Here, however, contrary to his expectations, he was destined to disappointment; for while Bouillon expressed the greatest devotion for Marie de Medicis, and asserted his wish for her restoration to power, which he coupled with the remark that "the court was still the same wine-shop as ever, although they had changed the stamp of their cork;" he pleaded his age and his infirmities as a pretext for declining to enter into the conspiracy which was about to be organised for her release; while, at the same time, he suggested that no individual could be found more eligible to secure the success of such an enterprise than M. d'Epernon. "He is both proud and daring;" he said in conclusion; "address yourself to him. This is the best advice which I can offer to the Queen-mother."*

Of this fact the abbé was himself persuaded; but two circumstances appeared to present insurmountable obstacles to his success with the haughty duke. In the first place he had withdrawn from the court greatly incensed against Marie de Medicis, who had sacrificed his interests to those of the Prince de Condé and the Maréchal d'Ancre; and in the next he was the declared enemy of Rucellaï himself. The position of the abbé was perplexing, as he well knew that M. d'Epernon never forgave an injury inflicted upon him by an inferior;

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 36. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, p. 324. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 159, 160. Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 450.

but the crisis was one of such importance that the Florentine resolved to make any concession rather than abandon his design. He was aware that, however hostile the duke might be to himself personally, his hatred of de Luynes far exceeded any feeling of animosity which he could possibly entertain towards a person whom he considered as a mere adventurer; and the ambition of the abbé determined him to sacrifice his pride to the necessities of the cause in which he laboured. Having therefore decided upon making his own feelings subservient to the success of his enterprise, he returned without hesitation to Paris, but he had still a great difficulty to overcome; as, until the duke should be made fully aware of the nature of his mission, he could not venture to intrude into his presence, although the moment was singularly favourable. M. d'Epernon had incurred the displeasure of the court by his quarrel with du Vair, and his open defiance of the favourite; his sons were equally incensed by the disappointment to which the Archbishop of Toulouse had been lately subjected, and had been as unguarded as himself in their expressions of disgust; but still Rucellaï was aware that he must exert the utmost precaution in order not to excite the resentment of the man upon whose co-operation he founded all his hopes of ultimate success; and after having carefully considered the best method of effecting his purpose, he decided upon inducing the Queen-mother to cause a letter to be forwarded to the Archbishop of Toulouse, wherein he was requested to negociate an

interview between his father and the abbé. The young prelate willingly undertook the task assigned to him; but whether it were that the duke still resented the conduct of Marie de Medicis, or that he feared to compromise himself still further with the court, he merely answered with some impatience: "I am about to retire to Metz: I will not listen to any propositions from the Queen until I am in my own government;" a reply which did not, however, tend to discourage the persevering Florentine.

When the details of this attempt were communicated to her, Marie hastened to forward to M. d'Epernon a watch superbly ornamented with diamonds, requesting him at the same time to confide to her the nature of his intentions; but he again refused to give any explanations until he should have left the capital.*

The journey of the duke was not long delayed. His position became daily more untenable; and on the 6th of May he left Paris, without even venturing to take leave of the King.†

Rucellaï no sooner learnt that M. d'Epernon had reached Metz than he prepared to follow up the negociation. He had afforded an asylum at Signy to Vincentio Ludovici, the secretary of the Maréchal d'Ancre, who had been sent to the Bastille at the period of his master's murder, where he had remained until after the execution of Leonora Galigaï, when an order was for-

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 37, 38.

† Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 148.

warded for his release. This man, who was an able diplomatist, and had great experience in court intrigue, possessed the entire confidence of his new patron, who hastened to dispatch him to the Duke d'Epernon with a letter of recommendation from the Queen-mother, and full instructions for treating with the haughty noble in her name. Ludovici acquitted himself creditably of his mission; and although M. d'Epernon at first replied to his representations by an indignant recapitulation of the several instances of ingratitude which he had experienced from the late Regent, he nevertheless admitted that he still felt a sincere interest in her cause. This concession sufficed to encourage the envoy; and after a time the negociation was opened. Vincentio promised in the name of the Queen, money, troops, and fortresses; and, moreover, such advantageous conditions that the duke finally consented to return a decisive answer after he should have had time to consider the proposals which had been made to him.*

Had M. d'Epernon followed the advice of his sons, the Marquis de la Valette and the Archbishop of Toulouse, the enterprise might at once have been accomplished. His vanity was flattered by the consciousness that his services were not only essential but even indispensable to the Queen-mother; but he had outlived the age of enthusiasm, and past experience had made him

* Relation du Cardinal de la Valette. Vie du Duc d'Epernon, Book VII. Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 38, 39. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 148, 149. Richelieu, Book IX, p. 490.

cautious. He therefore declined giving any definitive answer until he had ascertained who were the great nobles pledged to the faction of the Queen-mother, and the amount of money which she was prepared to disburse for the expenses of the war.

The agent of Rucellaï was ready with his reply. He informed the duke that the house of Guise, M. de Montmorency, the Maréchal de Bouillon, and several others were prepared to join him so soon as he should have declared himself in her favour; while Marie de Medicis was prepared to advance considerable sums whenever they should be required.

Upon receiving this assurance M. d'Epernon hesitated no longer. He had utterly forfeited his position at court, while he had reason to apprehend that de Luynes contemplated the confiscation of all his offices under the crown, and the seizure of his numerous governments; a circumstance which determined him openly to brave the displeasure of the King, and to espouse the interests of his mother.*

Throughout the whole of this negociation Ludovici had been careful not to betray to the duke the fact that Rucellaï had organised the faction of which he was about to become the leader; but he had no sooner pledged himself to the cause than it became necessary to inform him of the circumstance. His anger and indignation were for a time unbounded, but he was ulti-

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 39, 40. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 149, 150.

mately induced to consent to an interview with the abbé, who on his arrival at Metz soon succeeded in overcoming the prejudices of the offended noble, and in effecting his reconciliation with the Maréchal de Bouillon. A common interest induced both to bury past injuries in oblivion; and it was not long ere the Florentine was enabled to communicate to Marie de Medicis the cheering intelligence that the Cardinal de Guise, M. de Bouillon, and the Duke d'Epernon had agreed to levy an army of twelve thousand infantry and three thousand horse in the province of Champagne, in order to create a diversion in case the King should march troops towards Angoulême, whither it was resolved that she should be finally conveyed after her escape from Blois; as well as to defend the Marquis de la Valette if an endeavour were made to drive him out of Metz, while his father was absent with the Queen-mother.

On receiving this intelligence Marie forwarded to Rucellaï the sum of two hundred thousand crowns, of which he transferred a portion to the Cardinal de Guise and the Maréchal de Bouillon; and every precaution was taken to insure the success of the enterprise.*

Despite all the caution which had been observed, however, these transactions had not taken place without exciting the attention and suspicions of the court; and notwithstanding all his anxiety to secure the confidence

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 161, 162. Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 41.

and goodwill of the favourite, Richelieu had been one of the first to feel the effects of the hatred conceived against those who under any pretext adhered to the interests of the Queen-mother. It is true that on leaving Paris he had pledged himself to watch all her proceedings, and immediately to report every equivocal circumstance which might fall under his observation, but his antecedents were notorious, and no faith was placed in his promise. De Luynes and the ministers were alike distrustful of his sincerity; and only a few weeks after his arrival at Blois, an order reached him by which he was directed to retire forthwith to his priory at Coussay near Mirabeau, and to remain there until he should receive further instructions. In vain did Marie de Medicis—who, whatever might be her misgivings of his good-faith, was nevertheless acutely conscious of the value of Richelieu's adhesion—entreat of the King to permit his return to Blois, her request was denied, and the bishop had no alternative save obedience; nor was it long ere de Luynes induced Louis to banish him to Avignon.*

The annoyance of the Queen-mother upon this occasion was increased by the fact that Richelieu was replaced at her little court by M. de Roissy,† who was

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 736. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 252—293.

† Jean Jacques de Mesmes, Seigneur de Roissy, was the descendant of an ancient and illustrious family, which had produced several eminent men. He was a pupil of the learned Passerat, who resided for thirty years in his father's house. He died in 1642, senior councillor of state.

peculiarly obnoxious to her. Her representations to this effect were however disregarded; and she was compelled to receive him into her household. If the statement of his predecessor be a correct one, the unfortunate Marie had only too much cause to deprecate his admission to her circle, as thenceforward her captivity became more rigorous than ever, no person being permitted to approach her without his sanction; while her favourite attendants were dismissed by his orders, among others Caterina Selveggia, who had accompanied her from Florence and to whom she was much attached, and replaced by others who were devoted to the interests of de Luynes.* It is, however, difficult to believe that this account was not exaggerated, from the extremely bitter spirit evinced by the writer; who probably endeavoured to exonerate in so far as he was able, his own false-dealing towards his royal mistress and benefactor, by an overwrought detail of the increased insults to which she was subjected after his departure.

Thus much is nevertheless certain, that the unfortunate Queen was treated with a severity and disrespect which determined her to proceed to any extremity rather than submit to a continuance of such unmitigated mortification. Indignant at the prolonged imprisonment of Barbin, and the harsh treatment endured by the few who still adhered to her cause, she at length openly resisted the tyranny of her gaolers; upon which de Luynes, perceiving that the mission of Roissy had

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, p. 261.

failed, dispatched the Maréchal d'Ornano to Blois, with express orders to leave no means untried to intimidate her into submission; a task which he performed with such disrespectful rudeness, that in the course of the interview he so far forgot himself as to menace her with his hand, and to tell her that should she undertake anything inimical to the interests of the favourite, she should be exhausted "until she was as dry as wood."* This insult, however, only tended to arouse the proud spirit of the outraged Princess, who indignantly exclaimed: "I am weary of being daily accused of some new crime. This state of things must be put an end to; and it shall be so, even if I am compelled, like a mere private individual, to submit myself to the judgment of the Parliament of Paris."†

The new attitude thus assumed by the Queen-mother alarmed de Luynes, whose increasing unpopularity induced him to fear that the princes, who did not seek to disguise their disgust at his unbridled arrogance, would be easily persuaded to espouse her cause; and he endeavoured to excite her apprehensions by affecting to accomplish a reconciliation with M. de Condé, for which purpose he repeatedly dispatched Déageant to Vincennes in order that she might suppose the negociation to have commenced; but all these artifices failed to shake the resolution of Marie de Medicis.

This display of firmness augmented the dismay of

* Brienne, Mém., vol. i, p. 337.

† Déageant, Mém., pp. 129—131.

de Luynes and the ministers, who then conjointly endeavoured to compel her to ask the royal permission to retire to Florence; for which purpose they treated her with greater rigour than before. Several troops of cavalry were garrisoned in the immediate environs of Blois; she was not permitted to leave the fortress; and orders were given that she should not, under any pretext, be allowed to receive visitors without the previous sanction of the favourite.* Still the spirit of Marie remained unbroken; and, despite all precautions, it was ascertained that she pursued her purpose with untiring perseverance. It thus became necessary to adopt other measures. Cadenet, the brother of de Luynes, was accordingly instructed to proceed to her prison, and to inform her that the King was about to visit her, in order to make arrangements for her liberation; but the Queen had been already apprised of his intended arrival, as well as of the motive of his journey, and the fallacy of the promises which he had been directed to hold out; and consequently, after coldly expressing her sense of the intended clemency, and the gratification which she should derive from the presence of her son, she dismissed the messenger as calmly and as haughtily as though she had still been Regent of the kingdom.

De Luynes and his adherents felt that hitherto nothing had been gained; and they next determined to enlist the services of her confessor, the Jesuit Suffren, who had, as

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iv, pp. 555, 556. Lumières pour l'Hist. de France dans les Défenses de la Reine-mère.

they were aware, great influence over her mind. Suffren declared himself ready to do all in his power to meet the wishes of the King and his ministers, and to induce his royal penitent to submit patiently to her captivity, should he be convinced that in so acting he was fulfilling his duty towards both parties; and for the purpose of a thorough understanding on this point, he suggested that an accredited person should be named with whom he might enter into a negociation. De Luynes immediately appointed for this office another Jesuit called Seguerand, and the two ecclesiastics accordingly met to discuss the terms upon which Suffren was to offer the desired advice to the Queen-mother; but he had no sooner ascertained that an unqualified concession was demanded on her part without any reciprocal pledge upon that of her enemies, than he conscientiously declined to advance any such counsel, and the parties separated without coming to an understanding.

This failure no sooner reached the ears of Arnoux, the King's confessor, than he volunteered to renew the negociation, under the impression that he should be more successful than his colleague; an offer which was eagerly accepted by de Luynes, who procured for him an autograph letter from Louis XIII., which he was instructed to deliver personally into the hands of Marie. In this letter the King stated that having been informed of the wish of the Queen-mother to make a pilgrimage to some holy places, he hastened to express his gratification at the intelligence; and to assure her that he should rejoice to

learn that she took more exercise than she had lately done, for the benefit of her health, which was to him a subject of great interest; adding, moreover, that should circumstances permit, he would willingly bear her company; but that, in any case, he would not fail to do so in writing, as he desired that wherever she went she should be received, respected, and honoured like himself.

Habituated as she was to these wordy and equivocal communications, the Queen-mother, aware that her every word and gesture would be closely scrutinised by the reverend envoy, concealed her indignation, and affected to experience unalloyed gratification from this display of affection on the part of her son; a circumstance of which Arnoux availed himself to impress upon her mind the certainty of an approaching and complete reconciliation with the King, provided she should consent to declare herself ready to comply with his pleasure in all things, and pledge herself not to form any cabal against his authority, or to make any attempt to leave Blois until he should sanction her departure; and it would, moreover, appear that the Jesuit was eloquent, as he ultimately succeeded in overcoming the distrust of his listener. If Suffren, who had become wearied of the monotony of Blois, and of the insignificance to which his royal penitent was reduced by her enforced exile, was desirous to see her once more resume her position at court, Arnoux was no less anxious on his part to secure her continued absence, as he apprehended that her return to the capital would involve his own dis-

missal, from the fact of his having owed his appointment to de Luynes; while whatever may have been the arguments which he advanced, under cover of a sincere and earnest wish to see the mother and the son once more united by those natural bonds which had been for some time riven asunder, it is certain that he finally effected his object, and induced the unfortunate Princess to give full credence to his assurances of attachment towards herself, and his pious wish to accomplish a reconciliation which was the ardent desire of her own heart; and, accordingly, before the termination of the interview Marie de Medicis pledged herself to all that he required.

"I do not, Madam," said the subtle Jesuit, on receiving this assurance; "doubt for a single instant the sincerity of your Majesty; but others may prove less confiding than myself. I would therefore respectfully urge you to furnish me with some document which will bear testimony to the success of my mission, and demonstrate the excellent decision at which you have arrived. Do this, and I will guarantee that you shall obtain from the King your son all that you may desire."

Marie yielded; and her insidious adviser lost no time in drawing up an act by which the imprudent Queen bound herself by a solemn oath to submit in all things to the will and pleasure of the sovereign; to hold no intelligence with any individual either within or without the kingdom contrary to his interests; to denounce all those who were adverse to his authority; to assist in

their punishment; and, finally, to remain tranquilly at Blois till such time as Louis should see fit to recal her to the capital. She was, moreover, induced to consent to the publication of this document; and, thus armed, the astute Jesuit returned to court, where he received the acknowledgments of de Luynes, coupled with renewed promises of favour and support.*

Aware of the deep devotional feelings of the Queen-mother, de Luynes never for an instant apprehended that she would be induced to infringe an oath by which she had invoked "God and the holy angels;"† and he consequently considered her captivity as perpetual; but he forgot, when arriving at this conclusion, that although he had, through the medium of one Jesuit, succeeded in inducing her to consent to her own ruin, there still remained about her person a second, whose individual interests were involved with her own, and who would, in all probability, prove equally unscrupulous. Such was, in fact, the case; Suffren, to whose empire over the mind of Marie we have already alluded, did not hesitate (when as days and weeks passed away, and no effort was made towards her release, she began to evince symptoms of impatience, and of regret at the act into which she had been betrayed) to assure her that an extorted oath, however solemn, was not valid; and to impress upon her that she was not justified before her Maker,

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iv, pp. 557 — 561. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 168—170.

† Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 169.

in depriving herself of that liberty of action which had been His gift; a pious sophistry which could not but prove palatable to his persecuted mistress. Coupled with this consoling conviction, she soon perceived moreover, that she had at least derived one benefit from her imprudence, as the court-party, confiding in her word, made no attempt to prevent the realisation of the design which she had affected of a devotional pilgrimage; and which was sanctioned by the letter of the King.

Anxious, however, to destroy any latent hope in which she might still indulge of a return to power, de Luynes resolved to effect the ruin of all who had evinced any anxiety in her restoration; and there was suddenly a commission given to the council, "to bring to trial the authors of the cabals and factions, having for their object the recal of the Queen-mother, the deliverance of the Prince de Condé, and the overthrow of the state." The first victims of this sweeping accusation were the Baron de Persan, the brother-in-law of Vitry, and de Bournonville his brother, who were intrusted with the safe keeping of Barbin in the Bastille, and by whom he had been indirectly permitted to maintain a correspondence with his exiled mistress; together with the brothers Siti of Florence, and Durand, the composer of the King's ballets. The result of the trial proved the virulence of the prosecutors, but at the same time revealed their actual weakness, as they feared to execute the sentence pronounced against the three principal offenders; and were compelled to satiate their

vengeance upon the more insignificant and less guilty of the accused parties.

M. de Persan was simply exiled from the court; Bournonville was condemned to death, but not executed; while Barbin only escaped the scaffold by a single vote, and was condemned to banishment; a sentence which the King subsequently aggravated by changing it to perpetual imprisonment. The three pamphleteers, for such were in reality the Siti and Marie Durand, whose only crime appeared to have been that they had written a diatribe against de Luynes,* did not, however, escape so easily, as the two former were broken on the wheel and burned in the Place de Grève; while the third was hanged.

Such a wholesale execution upon so slight a pretext aroused the indignation of the citizens, and excited the murmurs of the people, who could not brook that the person of an ennobled adventurer should thus be held sacred, while the widow of Henry the Great was exposed to the insults of every time-serving courtier. Nor were the nobles less disgusted by such an evidence of heartless vanity and measureless pretension. The Dukes of Rohan and Montbazon, despite their family connexion with the arrogant favourite, had already openly endeavoured to effect a reconciliation between Louis and the Queen-mother; and the other disaffected princes no sooner witnessed the effect produced upon the populace

* Fontenay-Mareuil, Mém., p. 418.

by the cruel tyranny of de Luynes, than they resolved to profit by this manifestation, and to lose no time in attempting the deliverance of the royal prisoner.

Instant measures were taken to this effect; and meanwhile the favourite, lulled into false security, was wholly unconscious of this new conspiracy, believing that by his late deed of blood he had awed all his adversaries into submission.

CHAPTER II.

[1619.]

THE DUKE D'EPERNON LEAVES METZ—A TRAITOR—A MINISTER AT FAULT—THE DUKE DE BELLEGARDE OFFERS AN ASYLUM TO THE QUEEN-MOTHER—MARIE DE MEDICIS ESCAPES FROM BLOIS—SHE IS CONDUCTED BY M. D'EPERNON TO ANGOULÊME—GAIETIES OF THE CAPITAL—MARRIAGE OF THE PRINCESS CHRISTINE AND MADEMOISELLE DE VENDÔME—LOUIS XIII. IS APPRISED OF THE ESCAPE OF THE QUEEN—ALARM OF THE KING—ADVICE OF DE LUYNES—THE COUNCIL RESOLVE TO DISPATCH A BODY OF TROOPS UNDER M. DE MAYENNE TO REMOVE MARIE DE MEDICIS FROM THE KEEPING OF THE DUKE D'EPERNON—DISCONTENT OF THE CITIZENS—LOUIS XIII. ENTERS INTO A NEGOCIATION WITH HIS MOTHER—SHE REJECTS HIS CONDITIONS—RICHELIEU OFFERS HIMSELF AS A MEDIATOR, AND IS ACCEPTED—THE ROYAL FORCES MARCH ON ANGOULÊME—MARIE PREPARES FOR RESISTANCE—THE PRINCES WITHDRAW FROM HER CAUSE—SCHOMBERG PROPOSES TO BLOW UP THE POWDER-MAGAZINE AT ANGOULÊME—CRITICAL POSITION OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—SHE APPEALS TO THE PROTESTANTS, BUT IS REPULSED—SCHOMBERG TAKES UP ARMS AGAINST THE DUKE D'EPERNON—ALARM OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—RICHELIEU PROCEEDS TO ANGOULÊME—HE REGAINS THE CONFIDENCE OF THE QUEEN—SUCCESSFUL INTRIGUE OF RICHELIEU—MARIE IS DESERTED BY SEVERAL OF HER FRIENDS—A TREATY OF PEACE IS CONCLUDED BETWEEN THE KING AND HIS MOTHER—THE ENVOY OF MARIE INCURS THE DISPLEASURE OF LOUIS XIII.—THE MALCONTENTS RALLY ROUND THE QUEEN-MOTHER—THE PRINCES OF PIEDMONT VISIT MARIE AT ANGOULÊME—THEIR RECEPTION—MAGNIFICENCE OF THE DUKE D'EPERNON—THE QUEEN-MOTHER REFUSES TO QUIT ANGOULÊME—AMBITION OF RICHELIEU—WEAKNESS OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—FATHER JOSEPH ENDEAVOURS TO INDUCE THE QUEEN-MOTHER TO RETURN TO THE COURT—SHE IS ENCOURAGED IN HER REFUSAL BY RICHELIEU—THE RIVAL QUEENS—MARIE LEAVES ANGOULÊME—HER PARTING WITH THE DUKE D'EPERNON—SHE IS RECEIVED

AT POITIERS BY THE CARDINAL DE RETZ AND THE DUKE DE LUYNES—THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ OFFERS THE HAND OF HIS SISTER ELEONORE DE BOURBON TO THE BROTHER OF DE LUYNES AS THE PRICE OF HIS LIBERATION—THE SWORD OF THE PRINCE IS RESTORED TO HIM—DUPLICITY OF THE FAVOURITE—MARIE RESOLVES TO RETURN TO ANGOULÊME, BUT IS DISSUADED BY HER FRIENDS—THE DUKE DE MAYENNE ESPOUSES THE CAUSE OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—A ROYAL MEETING—RETURN OF THE COURT TO TOURS—MARIE PROCEEDS TO CHINON, AND THENCE TO ANGERS—THE PROTESTANTS WELCOME THE QUEEN-MOTHER TO ANJOU—ALARM OF DE LUYNES—LIBERATION OF THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ—INDIGNATION OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—POLICY OF RICHELIEU—DE LUYNES SOLICITS THE RETURN OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER TO THE CAPITAL—SHE REFUSES TO COMPLY—DE LUYNES IS MADE GOVERNOR OF PICARDY—HIS BROTHERS ARE ENNOBLED.

CHAPTER II.

[1619.]

THE Duke d'Epernon, to whom had been confided the important task of effecting the escape of the Queen-mother from her fortress-prison, had discussed all the necessary measures with the Abbé Rucellaï, who had, as we have stated, acquired his entire confidence; and his first step was to request permission of the King to leave Metz, (where he had been ordered to remain for the purpose of watching the movements in Germany,) and to proceed to Angoulême; but as he was aware that this permission would be refused, he did not await a reply, and commenced his journey on the 22nd of January (1619), accompanied by a hundred gentlemen well armed, forty guards, and his personal attendants; taking with him the sum of eight thousand pistoles together with the whole of his jewels. In consequence of the amount of his baggage he was not enabled to travel more than ten leagues each day; but as no

impediment presented itself, he arrived safely at Confolens in Poitou, where he was joined by his son the Archbishop of Toulouse, who was awaiting him in that city with the principal nobles of his several governments.*

Meanwhile Rucellaï had intrusted one of his lacqueys with letters for the Queen-mother, in which he informed her of the day of the duke's intended departure from Metz; but this man, convinced by the earnest manner in which his master enjoined him to take the greatest precautions in the delivery of his despatches, that the packet in his possession was one of importance, instead of proceeding to Blois, hastened to the capital, and offered to some of the followers of de Luynes to put a secret into the possession of their master, provided he were well recompensed for his treachery. The favourite was duly informed of the circumstance, but prosperity had rendered him incautious, and he neglected to avail himself of the intelligence; suffering several days to elapse before he made any inquiry as to the nature of the communication which had thus been volunteered. Fortunately for the Queen-mother, one of her own adherents was less dilatory; and having ascertained that the confidential lacquey of Rucellaï had arrived in Paris, he caused him to be found, and took possession of the letters before they could be transferred to the hands of her enemy. As, however, he in his turn delayed to

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 449, 450. Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 172. Matthieu, Hist. des Derniers Troubles, Book III, p. 626.

forward them to Marie de Medicis, she became alarmed by the silence of the Duke d'Epernon, and believed that her friends had abandoned her to her fate; a conviction which reduced her to despair. Her hopes had latterly been excited; the representations and arguments of Suffren, seconded by her own desires, had quieted the scruples of her conscience; and this new check was bitter in the extreme. A thousand fears assailed her; treachery and hatred enveloped her on all sides; and superadded to her own ruin, she was compelled to contemplate that of all who had adhered to her fallen fortunes; when, precisely as she was about to abandon all hope, du Plessis, the confidant of M. d'Epernon, arrived at Blois with the welcome intelligence that the duke was awaiting her at Loches, very uneasy on his side at the nonreceipt of her reply to his letters.

The appearance of the messenger quieted the apprehensions of Marie, but she still remained in a position of considerable perplexity from the fact that all her most devoted adherents were absent negociating with the great nobles in her behalf, having found their mission one of considerably more difficulty than the profuse professions of the latter had led her to anticipate. The Duke de Bellegarde, her relative, had written to dissuade her from placing herself in the hands of a noble whose arrogance could not fail to disgust those who desired to serve her. "As for myself, Madam;" he concluded; "I am quite ready to receive your Majesty in my government of Burgundy, but I cannot offer my services in

any part of the kingdom which is subject to the authority of M. d'Epernon."

Such an assurance alarmed the Queen-mother, who had great reason to fear that the same objection would be even more stringently urged by others less interested in her safety; but she had now gone too far to recede. The duke had already incurred a risk of the King's displeasure by leaving Metz without the royal permission; he was at that moment anticipating her arrival at Loches, whence he was to conduct her to the château of Angoulême; and, finally, she felt all the force of the arguments of du Plessis, who reminded her that every moment was precious, as from hour to hour the enterprise might become known to the favourite, and consequently rendered abortive.*

Hasty preparations were made; and during the night of the 21st of February, she escaped by a ladder from the window of her closet, attended only by the Count de Brienne, a single waiting-woman, and two individuals of her household. It was not, however, without considerable difficulty that she accomplished this portion of her undertaking, as at the last moment it was discovered that, from her great bulk, the casement would scarcely admit the passage of her person. Despair nevertheless made her desperate; and after several painful efforts she succeeded in forcing herself through the aperture; but her nerves were so much shaken by this unlucky circumstance, that when she had reached

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 71, 72. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 172, 173.

the platform, whence a second ladder was to conduct her to the ditch of the fortress, she declared her utter inability to descend it; and she was ultimately folded in a thick cloak, and cautiously lowered down by the joint exertions of her attendants. The Count de Brienne and M. du Plessis then supported her to the carriage which was in waiting at the bridge; and Marie de Medicis found herself a fugitive in her own kingdom, surrounded only by half a dozen individuals, and possessed of no other resources than her jewels.

The fugitives travelled at a rapid pace until they reached Montrichard, where the Archbishop of Toulouse, the Abbé Rucellaï, and several other persons of note had assembled to offer their congratulations to the Queen. Relays of horses were also awaiting her; and after a brief halt the journey was resumed. At a short distance from Loches she was met by the Duke d'Epernon at the head of a hundred and fifty horsemen; hurried greetings were exchanged, and without further delay the whole party entered the town; where the first act of Marie de Medicis after she had offered her acknowledgments to her liberators, was to address a letter to the King, wherein she set forth her reasons for leaving Blois without his permission, in terms as submissive as though he had not broken his faith towards herself; coupled with assurances of her affection for his person, and her zeal for his welfare.

Nothing, perhaps, is more painfully striking than the mutual deception practised by the mother and the son

throughout the whole correspondence consequent on their separation. The abuse of terms was so open and so palpable, and the covert rancour so fearlessly paraded by both, that it is impossible to suppress a feeling of disgust as the eye rests upon the elaborately-rounded periods, and hollow professions with which their several letters abound.

Marie remained two days at Loches, in order to await those of her attendants who were to rejoin her upon the instant; and then proceeded, still under the escort of the Duke d'Epernon, to Angoulême; where she was shortly afterwards joined by several disaffected nobles who had retired from the court, unable to brook the authority of the favourite; while, anxious to retain the confidence of those who were personally attached to her, although they had declined to join her faction, she dispatched a confidential messenger to the capital with numerous letters, and among others one to the Maréchal de Bassompierre, in which she explained the motives of her evasion.

Paris had, meanwhile, been a scene of constant festivity. The dissipations of the carnival, and the fair of St. Germain, had occupied the time and thoughts of the whole court; and the Louvre had put forth all its magnificence in honour of the nuptials of the Princess Christine and the Prince of Piedmont; as well as those of Mademoiselle de Vendôme, the natural sister of the King, and the Duke d'Elbœuf. Ballets, balls, and banquets were given by all the great nobles;

N°1. Fac-simile of a Letter to M. de Bassompierre, dictated and signed by Marie de Medecis on her escape from Blois.

Mon Cousin, Je n'ay desiré partant de Blois que Sernir au public & d'avoir liberté le Roy monsieur mon filz me l'acorde telle que Je la pouvois souhaitter, & remet a vue aux fois ses advis que Je luy doiz donner pour la prosperité de ses affaires ce qui faut qu'il aye reconnu maintenant que les armes le sont Inutiles contre mon Innocence dont l'on luy pouvoit entendre du commencement. Il les fait congedier par tout & donne a ses subiectz le repos & la paix, me promettant la favorable protection, & la bonne amitié que Je doiz esperer de son bon naturel sur le quel me reposant Je n'ay point procuré autre avantage & Je vous en ay voulu Informer affin que vous soyez content de representer au tres. pere la sincerité de mon procedé & l'envie que J'ay eue de me conformer a ses bons conseilz, ---- asseurant de la continuation de ma bienveillance & de l'estime que Je fais de vre affection comme estant

Mon Cousin

d'Angoulesme ce
May 1619

Vostre bien bonne Cousine
Marie

fireworks and illuminations amused the populace; and, finally, the young sovereign became so thoroughly weary of the tumult about him that he retired to St. Germain-en-Laye in order to escape from its obsession, and to obtain the rest which he was not however destined to find even there; for he had no sooner arrived than he was followed by a courier charged with despatches announcing the escape of the Queen-mother.

Alarmed by the intelligence, Louis immediately returned to the capital, and summoned his council, before whom he laid the letter written by Marie at Loches; and a second also addressed to himself by M. d'Epernon, in which, with consummate sophistry, the duke endeavoured to justify his share in her evasion. Nor was de Luynes less terrified than his royal master by this sudden transition of affairs; and he consequently laboured to impress upon the King and his ministers the absolute necessity of refusing to hold any intercourse with his mother until he should be in a position to compel her obedience to his will; and to reduce the insurgent nobles, who had openly declared in her favour, to a full and complete submission. The letters which were laid before the council containing, moreover, a demand for the reformation of the government, every individual holding office under the crown had a personal interest in supporting this advice; and it was consequently resolved that Louis should affect to believe that his mother had been forcibly removed from Blois by the Duke d'Epernon; and that a large body of troops

should be forthwith assembled for her deliverance, under the command of the Duke de Mayenne, with whom it was known that she had parted on bad terms.*

So extreme a resolution no sooner became known, however, than it created general dissatisfaction. The unnatural spectacle of a son in arms against his mother inspired all right-minded people with horror; and when the King a few days subsequently proceeded to the Parliament to verify some financial edicts, (the enormous recent outlay of the court having exhausted the royal treasury,) he was coldly received; and instead of the loyal acclamations with which he had hitherto been greeted, he heard on all sides murmured expressions of discontent and impatience. These manifestations of popular disaffection alarmed the ministers, and a new council was held, at which it was determined that before proceeding to the *ultima ratio regum* a negociation should be attempted with the emancipated Princess; and for this purpose the Count de Béthune and the Abbé Bérulle† were dispatched to Marie de Medicis with full

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 451, 452. Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 174. Bassompierre, Mém., p. 129. Matthieu, Hist. des Derniers Troubles, Book iii, p. 621.

† Pierre de Bérulle, the descendant of an ancient and noble family of Champagne, was born on the 14th of February 1575, and soon became remarkable for his virtue and science. He was the friend of St. François de Sales, the founder of the congregation of the Oratory in France, and was promoted to the conclave

powers to effect a treaty between herself and the King.

The first suggestion offered to the Queen-mother by the royal envoys was her abandonment of M. d'Epernon; but she indignantly refused to adopt so treacherous a line of policy, declaring that she would listen to no compromise which involved a disavowal of her obligations to one whom she justly considered as her liberator.

"Moreover, Messieurs;" she said proudly; "even were I capable of such an act of treachery, I am unable so to misrepresent the conduct of the gallant duke; who holds in his possession, not only the letter of the King, wherein he gives me full authority to leave Blois, and to proceed whithersoever I may see fit in the interest of my health, but also one which I myself addressed to him from Blois entreating his assistance in my escape from that fortress, and his escort to Angoulême. I request therefore that as loyal gentlemen you will refrain from accusing M. d'Epernon of an act of violence which the respect due to the mother of his sovereign would have rendered impossible on his part. I am here because I was weary of the constraint and insult of which I had been so long the victim; and I am ready to support the

by Urban VIII. in 1627. He did not, however, long enjoy his new dignity, having died at the altar while saying the mass on the 2nd of October 1629, before he had attained his fifty-sixth year. He was the author of several theological works. An ably-written life of the Cardinal de Bérulle is due to the pen of M. Hubert de Cerisi.

whole responsibility of the step which I have seen fit to take."

As the determined attitude of the Queen-mother rendered all further discussion upon this point at once idle and impolitic, de Luynes resolved to induce her to come to terms with the King without any allusion to M. d'Epernon; and for this purpose the Archbishop of Sens was directed to act in concert with the two original envoys, and to endeavour to convince her that a prolonged opposition to the will of the sovereign could only terminate in her own destruction. Still, however, Marie remained firm, rejecting the conditions which were proposed to her as unworthy alike of her rank and of the position she had hitherto held in the kingdom; and the month of March went by without the attainment of any result. De Luynes, irritated by a pertinacity which threatened his tenure of authority, renewed his entreaties for the formation of a strong army with which he could secure the overthrow of the Duke d'Epernon; and at the same time he suggested to Louis the recal of the Bishop of Luçon, who had once more offered his services as a negociator between the contending parties.

The young King, who saw only through the eyes of his favourite, was induced to comply with both proposals; and Marie de Medicis no sooner ascertained that the royal troops were about to march upon Angoulême, than she made preparations for defence. In order to do this more effectually, she addressed autograph letters to the

Dukes of Mayenne and Rohan, to the Maréchal de Lesdiguières, and to several other great nobles, soliciting their support in the impending struggle; but with the sole exception of M. de Rohan, they all returned cold and negative replies, informing her that the duty which they owed to the King would not permit them to comply with her request; after which they forwarded her letters to the court, together with the answers which they had made; thus purchasing their safety at the expense of their honour. The Duke de Rohan, on receiving her application, also declined to assist her, it is true; but he did so loyally and respectfully; assuring her Majesty that he greatly regretted she should so long have delayed requesting his co-operation, as he would have served her zealously and faithfully; whereas he was now no longer in a position to espouse her interests, the King having commanded him to remain in his government of Poitou in order to maintain peace in that province, a duty which his honour consequently enforced upon him; but declaring at the same time, that even while obeying the commands of her son, he would not undertake anything inimical to her own interests; and entreating her to effect an understanding with the sovereign in order to avert the evils of a civil war, and to insure to herself the liberty and safety which could alone enable her to rally about her person all those who were sincerely desirous to serve her.

Although touched by the manliness and dignity of this reply, the Queen-mother bitterly felt the loss of

such an ally; nor were her disappointment and mortification lessened when she discovered that the Maréchal de Schomberg, anxious to convince Louis of the extent of his zeal, and so to possess himself of the royal favour, had formed the design of blowing up the powder-magazine of Angoulême, and thus terminating the negociation by a *coup de main* of which she and her adherents were destined to be the victims. The project was indeed discovered and defeated; but the impression which it left upon her mind was one of gloom and discouragement.*

We have already seen that the Duke de Mayenne had protested to Rucellaï his attachment to the cause and person of Marie; yet he did not hesitate to accept the command of the army which was organised against her, and to march upon the province of Angoumois at the head of twelve thousand men. The position of the Queen-mother was critical. She issued continual commissions for the levy of troops, but she was unable to furnish the necessary funds for their support; and in this difficulty she resolved to appeal to the Protestants who were at that time holding their general assembly at La Rochelle. She was aware that they were inimical to de Luynes, and she trusted that they might consequently be induced to join her own faction. Once more, however, she was fated to

* Rohan, Mém., Book 1, pp. 116, 117. Richelieu, Hist de la Mère et du Fils, vol. ii, pp. 353, 354. Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 77. Mercure Français, 1619.

disappointment. They were dissuaded from such a project by du Plessis';* and M. d'Epernon, after the most strenuous efforts, could not succeed in raising more than six thousand foot and one thousand horse, with which to make head against the royal army.

Moreover, Schomberg, lieutenant of the King in Limousin under M. d'Epernon, who was the governor of the province, declared against him, and took the town of Uzerche which was feebly garrisoned;† while the duke was engaged in checking the advance of Mayenne; nor was it long ere intelligence arrived at Angoulême that Boulogne-sur-Mer had opened its gates to the royal forces, and thus revolted against the authority of Epernon, who was also governor of Picardy.‡

These disasters were a source of great anxiety to Marie de Medicis, who began to apprehend that should the duke be in like manner despoiled of his other fortified cities he would no longer be in a position to afford her any protection; but fortunately de Luynes had also taken alarm. The citizens made no attempt to conceal their dissatisfaction; the populace openly murmured in the streets; and the favourite had not yet had time to forget the popular vengeance which had been wreaked upon the wretched

* Vie de du Plessis-Mornay, Book IV.

† Matthieu, Hist. des Derniers Troubles, Book III, p. 636.

‡ Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 102. Déageant, Mem., pp. 203, 204. Vie du Duc d'Epernon, Book VIII.

Concini; no wonder therefore that he trembled for himself. Richelieu had been, as already stated, recalled from his exile at Avignon; and the moment was now arrived in which his services were essential to de Luynes, by whom he was forthwith dispatched to Angoulême, on the understanding that the King had perfect confidence in his fidelity, and placed implicit reliance on his desire to prove his affection to his person. The astute prelate required no further explanation as to what was required of him; he was aware that his compulsatory absence had rendered his services more than ever coveted by the Queen-mother; and he lost no time in setting forth upon his treacherous errand, furnished with a letter to Marie, beneath which Louis wrote with his own hand: "I beg you to believe that this document explains my will, and that you cannot afford me greater pleasure than by conforming to it."

The effect of Richelieu's presence at the court of the Queen-mother soon became apparent. He had so thoroughly possessed himself of her confidence that she suffered him to penetrate even to the inmost recesses of her heart; and great and dignified as she could be under excitement, we have already shown that Marie de Medicis never had sufficient strength of character to suffice to herself for any lengthened period. Exhausted by the violence of sudden feeling and emotion, she became enervated and nervous after the impulsion had passed away; and gladly clung to

the extraneous support of those who professed to espouse her interests. Richelieu had studied her temperament, and understood it. Before he had been many days at Angoulême, the Duke d'Epernon and his son became aware that they no longer possessed the same influence as heretofore; while the Abbé Rucellaï, indignant at the coldness with which his advice was received and his services requited, withdrew in disgust, accompanied by several of her most attached servants; among others the Marquis de Thémines, who, shortly afterwards, irritated by a reverse of fortune which he had not foreseen, sought a pretext of quarrel with Henry de Richelieu, the elder brother of the Bishop of Luçon, whom he challenged, and left dead upon the field. Thus the unhappy Queen became wholly at the mercy of her insidious counsellor; while he, on his part, acted with so subtle a policy that his services were alike essential to both parties; and he saw himself in a position to profit by the projected reconciliation, in whatever manner it might be ultimately accomplished.

Meanwhile the Archbishop of Sens, the Count de Béthune, and the Abbé de Bérulle, in conjunction, and with the assistance of Richelieu, were still proceeding with the negociation; and, finally, the King, anxious to terminate the affair, gave a commission to the Cardinal de la Rochefoucault to conclude the treaty. The conditions were easily agreed upon, as Marie was enslaved by the influence of Richelieu,

and disheartened by the lukewarmness of her former friends; while Louis was weary of a contention which made him hateful in the eyes of all Europe, and which fettered his movements without adding to his renown.

On the 30th of April the necessary documents were accordingly signed; and by these the Queen-mother was authorised to constitute her household as she should deem fitting; to reside wherever she thought proper; and to preserve all her revenues intact; while, in consideration of these privileges, she consented to exchange her government of Normandy for that of Anjou. She was, moreover, to receive six hundred thousand livres for the liquidation of her debts; and M. d'Epernon fifty thousand crowns to indemnify him for the loss of the town of Boulogne; and with his adherents to be declared exonerated from all blame, and permitted to retain possession of their offices under the crown; and, finally, to the demand made by the Queen-mother that she should be placed in possession of the city and castle of Amboise, or, failing that, of those of Nantes, the Abbé de Bérulle was authorised to inform her on the part of the King that "in addition to the government of Anjou, the town and fortress of Angers, and the Pont de Cé, he was willing to give her, in lieu of what she asked, the city and castle of Touraine, together with four hundred men for the protection of those places, a company of gendarmes, and a troop of light-horse,

in addition to her body-guards; the whole to be maintained at his own expense."*

This treaty was no sooner completed than Marie de Medicis wrote to her son to express the joy which she experienced at their reconciliation; and she intrusted her letter to the Count de Brienne, with instructions to deliver it into the hands of the King, who had removed with his court to Tours, ostensibly for the purpose of a more speedy meeting with the Queen-mother. The result proved, however, that Marie could not have selected a worse messenger, as de Brienne, who was young and arrogant, soon gave offence both to Louis and his favourite. Having declared that he would not, under any circumstances, show the most simple courtesy to de Luynes, he did not remove his hat when he met him in the royal ante-room; a want of respect which excited the displeasure of the monarch, who was easily led to believe that he had been instructed by his mistress to affect this contempt towards an individual with whom he himself condescended to live on the most familiar terms; and, consequently, when de Brienne next presented himself to receive the reply of his Majesty to his despatches, he was desired not to intrude himself into the presence of the King, who would select an envoy less wanting in reverence to

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 179—181. Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 452, 453. Bassompierre, Mém., p. 129. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. ii, p. 356. Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iv, pp. 626, 627.

his sovereign when he should deem it advisable to forward his own missive to Angoulême. The ill-advised equerry of Marie was therefore compelled to retire without his credentials; and the Queen-mother was subjected to the mortification of offering an ample apology to Louis through the medium of the messenger whom he in his turn dispatched to her, for the arrogance and discourtesy of her follower.*

Meanwhile Marie de Medicis once more saw herself at the head of a court nearly equal in numbers and magnificence to that of the King himself; and daily presided over festivities which satisfied even her thirst of splendour and display. It sufficed that any noble felt himself aggrieved by the presumption, or disappointed by the want of generosity of the favourite, to induce him to offer his services to the Queen-mother; who welcomed every accession of strength with a suavity and condescension rendered doubly acceptable from the contrast which it exhibited to the morose indifference of the King, and the insolent haughtiness of de Luynes. Thus constant arrivals afforded a pretext for perpetual gaieties; and the Duke d'Epernon received the new allies of his royal mistress with a profusion and recklessness of outlay which excited universal astonishment.

De Luynes had considered it expedient to offer his congratulations to the Queen-mother and M. d'Epernon, upon the reconciliation which had taken place; and in

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iv, pp. 631, 632.

order to evince his respect for Marie had caused M. de Brantes his brother to accompany the Cardinal de la Rochefoucault to Angoulême for this purpose, where both were received with a splendour, and feasted with a pomp and research to which they had been long unaccustomed at the court of Paris.

All these entertainments were, however, surpassed by those given by the duke on the occasion of a visit paid to her Majesty by Victor Amedée of Piedmont, her new son-in-law, and his brother Prince Thomas of Savoy, who had obtained the sanction of the King to proceed to Angoulême to offer their respects to their illustrious relative. The two princes were met beyond the gates of the city by M. d'Epernon at the head of a party of mounted nobles, attired in their state dresses; and apartments were prepared for them in the episcopal palace, furnished in the most costly manner, to which they were conducted amid the firing of cannon, the sounds of martial music, and the acclamations of the citizens; rushes and green boughs were strewn along their path, the balconies of the houses were draped with tapestry and coloured cloths, and a banquet had been prepared which was presided by the Queen-mother. The town of Angoulême was, meanwhile, alive with excitement and delight until nightfall, when the streets were brilliantly illuminated, and the joyous multitude were entertained by the munificence of the Duke d'Epernon with a brilliant display of fireworks which continued until midnight. Nothing, in short, evinced to the august

visitors any symptom of a reverse of fortune, such as they had been led to expect, in the position and circumstances of Marie de Medicis. They had merely exchanged one scene of royal display for another; and when, upon the morrow, they were invited to attend a hunt which had been organised in their honour, their surprise and gratification were too evident for concealment.*

That the Queen-mother deeply felt the extent of the sacrifice made by M. d'Epernon in her cause can admit of no doubt, for she was aware that he was rapidly exhausting his resources in order to uphold her dignity; and it is equally certain that she, on her side, was unwearied in her efforts to insure to him the gratitude and respect of her royal guests; an attempt in which she so fully succeeded that on the return of the two young princes to the capital, the admiration which they expressed both of the Queen and her deliverer excited the displeasure of de Luynes, who could ill brook the rivalry of a man whom he at once feared and hated. It was rumoured that this visit of the royal brothers to Angoulême had been authorised by Louis at the suggestion of the favourite, who had laboured to convince them of his anxiety for the return of Marie to the court, and had solicited their assistance in impressing upon her the sincerity of his professions. Be this as it may, however, it is at least certain that if the princes lent themselves to his views, they failed in producing the desired effect upon her mind; as, despite the invitation of the

* Vie du Duc d'Epernon, Book VIII.

King that she should approach nearer to Tours in order to facilitate their projected interview, she constantly excused herself upon the most frivolous pretexts, and continued to reside at Angoulême without making the slightest preparation to obey his summons.*

This reluctance on her part to conclude a reconciliation, of which she had hitherto expressed herself so desirous, excited the surprise and apprehension of the court, who sought a solution of the mystery from the Bishop of Luçon; but the wily Richelieu was careful not to betray that they were his own counsels which regulated the conduct of the Queen-mother. He had well weighed his position, and he felt that it was not yet sufficiently assured to enable him to oppose his influence to that of de Luynes. He aspired to a seat in the council; and in order to attain it he must render himself more necessary to the favourite than he had hitherto been enabled to do; a fact to which he was keenly alive. Should the mother and the son meet at that moment, he was aware that the excitable temperament of Marie would not fail to betray her into the power of de Luynes, and with her would fall his own fortunes; whereas, time must necessarily calm her first exultation, and render her more tenacious of her power. Thus, then, Richelieu jealously watched every change in her mood; excited

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iv, pp. 632, 633. Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 115. Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 454. Bassompierre, Mém., p. 129. Fontenay, Mém., pp. 436—450. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. ii, p. 372.

her distrust; aggravated her animosities; and, finally, convinced her that her strength existed only in opposition to the King's will. Marie, naturally suspicious, lent herself readily to this specious reasoning: she had sufficient knowledge of the character of her son to feel that his eager desire to obliterate the past was produced by no feeling of affection towards herself, but might simply be attributed to his anxiety to weaken a faction which had become formidable; and by depriving her adherents of a pretext for opposing his authority, to rid himself of a danger which augmented from day to day. Too readily the prey of her passions, Marie de Medicis exulted in this conviction; and had Louis and his ministers been wise enough to accept her reluctance as a refusal to return to court, and abandoned all attempts to change her determination, it is probable that this simulated indifference, and the powerlessness to which it must ere long have reduced both herself and her followers, would have caused her immediate compliance; but, bent upon compelling her obedience, they by successive endeavours to overcome her disinclination to resign the comparative independence to which she had attained, only played into the hands of the astute bishop, by strengthening her resolution to resist.

Shortly after the departure of the Princes of Savoy, the Capuchin Father Joseph du Tremblay,* the con-

* François le Clerc du Tremblay, known as the Capuchin Father Joseph, was the elder son of Jean le Clerc, president

fidential friend of Richelieu, was ordered to proceed in his turn to Angoulême, and to endeavour to induce Marie de Medicis, with whom the courtly monk was known to be a favourite, to resume the position to which she was entitled as the widow of one sovereign and the mother of another; and as a preliminary step, to meet the King according to his expressed wish, before his return to the capital. This was, however, only another false step on the part of de Luynes, as the reverend father felt by no means disposed to thwart the measures of the man to whom he looked for his own future advancement; and his mission, in consequence, so signally

of the Court of Requests at Paris, and of Marie de la Fayette. His sponsors were the Duke d'Alençon (brother of Francis II.) and the Duchess d'Angoulême, the natural sister of that Prince. He was a man of great learning and talent, but cunning, ambitious, and unscrupulous, who had attached himself to the fortunes of Richelieu, of whom he was the *âme damnée*, and who endeavoured to cause him, in his turn, to be admitted to the honours of the conclave. He died suddenly at Ruel on the 18th of December, 1638; and some years subsequently the Duchess de Guise having, at her own expense, repaved the choir of the Capuchin church, the tomb of *la petite Eminence Grise*, as he was familiarly called by the Parisians, was placed beneath that of Père Ange (the Cardinal-Duke de Joyeuse), in front of the steps of the high altar. Richelieu had caused an eulogistic and lengthy inscription on marble to be affixed to his sepulchre; but the Parisians, who more truly estimated his merits, added others considerably more pungent, among which the most successful was the following:

"Passant, n'est-ce pas chose étrange
Qu'un démon soit auprès d'un ange."

failed that the suspicions of the court-party were once more aroused against Richelieu, although they were unable wholly to fathom the depth of his subtle policy. These suspicions were moreover strengthened by the fact that a new letter, addressed by the King to his mother, full of the most pressing entreaties that she would divest herself of her distrust, and confide in his affection (which letter was delivered to her by the Duke de Montbazon, the father-in-law of de Luynes), produced no better result. In vain did the duke represent the earnest desire of Louis to terminate a state of things so subversive of order, and so opposed to all natural feeling, and assure her of the sincerity with which his Majesty invited her to share his power; Marie, prompted by the astute prelate, refused to yield.

"I am not invited to return to court;" she said bitterly; "I am to be constrained to do so; but I will consent only upon one condition. Let the Duke de Mayenne become my surety that I shall be treated as becomes my dignity, both by the King and his favourite; and I will again enter the capital. Without this safeguard I will not place myself in the power of an adventurer."

Mayenne refused, however, to offer any such pledge, declaring that it would not become him to interfere in any misunderstanding between the sovereign and his mother; and Marie de Medicis thus saw herself under the necessity of seeking some other method of

evading compliance. A pretext was soon found, however; and when next urged upon the subject, she declared that her disinclination to involve the court in new difficulties must prevent her reappearance in the royal circle until the question of precedence was clearly established between herself and the Queen-consort.

Anne of Austria had not failed, from her first arrival in France, girl as she was, to express great contempt for the house of Medicis; and to assert the superiority of her own descent over that of her mother-in-law; an assumption which had aroused all the indignation of Marie, who had revenged herself by constantly speaking of Anne as "the little Queen;" an insult which was immediately retorted by her daughter-in-law in a manner that was keenly felt by the haughty Italian, puerile and inconsequent as it was. On every occasion Louis terminated the letters that he addressed to her by subscribing himself "your very humble and obedient son," and Marie insisted that his wife should follow his example; but Anne refused to make such a concession, declaring that as the Queen-mother merely signed herself "your very affectionate mother," she would, on her side, do no more than inscribe herself "your very affectionate daughter." Nor was this the only subject of dispute, for Anne of Austria also insisted that as Queen-regnant, she had a right to precedence over a Princess, who although she had formerly occupied the throne, had, by the death of her husband, degenerated into a

subject; nor could she be convinced to the contrary even by past examples. In vain did Louis insist that his young wife should yield, and rebuke her when she was wanting in respect to the widowed Queen; the Spanish pride of Anne was proof against his displeasure, and it was found impossible to reconcile their conflicting claims."*

In the month of August the King conferred the promised *bâton* of Maréchal de France upon Charles de Choiseul, Marquis de Praslin, and Jean François de la Guiche, Sieur de Saint-Géran.

The contention between Anne of Austria and her royal mother-in-law remained undecided; and the position which the latter was to occupy at the court was consequently not clearly defined. She had obtained no single advantage for which she had striven; no guarantee upon which she had insisted; and, nevertheless, on the 19th of August, she left Angoulême for the capital with a suite of ten coaches, each drawn by six horses, and an escort of five hundred horsemen. The Duke d'Epernon bore her company to the extreme frontier of his government, where they parted with mutual manifestations of affection and goodwill. As the duke, who had alighted from the carriage where he had hitherto occupied a place beside her Majesty, stood near the door expressing his last wishes for her prosperity, and was about to raise her hand to his lips,

* Le Vassor vol. ii, pp. 118, 119. Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. v, pp. 49—51. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 184, 185.

Marie, who was drowned in tears, drew a costly diamond from her finger, which she entreated him to wear as a mark of her gratitude for the signal services that he had rendered to her in her need; and then throwing herself back upon her cushions she wept bitterly.

Well might she weep! She left behind her those who had rallied about her in her misfortunes; and she was going forth into an uncertain future, of which no human eye could penetrate the mysteries. The die was, however, cast; and as a last demonstration of his respect and regard for her person, M. d'Epernon had instructed his son the Archbishop of Toulouse to follow his royal mistress to court; while he himself saw the brilliant train depart, impoverished it is true by his uncalculating devotion to her cause, but proud and happy in the conviction that without his aid she would still have been a captive.

The retinue of the Queen-mother comprised the ladies of honour, the Duke de Montbazon, the Bishop of Luçon, and several other individuals of note; and, thus attended, she reached Poitiers, where the carriages of the King were awaiting her arrival, and relays of horses were provided to expedite her journey to Tours. From Poitiers she dispatched Richelieu in advance to announce her approach to Louis; and on his return to report the completion of his mission, he was eloquent on the subject of the graciousness of his reception both by the King and the favourite.

As she drew near the city Marie was met by the Cardinal de Retz* and the Père Arnoux, accompanied by a numerous train of gentlemen, by whom she was conducted to the Château de Montbazon, where she was to pass the night; and on the following morning the newly-made Duke de Luynes arrived to pay his respects to the mother of his sovereign. The Queen devoured her mortification, and received her unwelcome guest with great affability; but he had not been long in her presence ere he renewed all her suspicions of his sincerity.

The Prince de Condé, who feared that a reconciliation between Louis and the Queen-mother would militate against his enlargement, had exerted himself to the utmost to procure his liberty before they should have time to meet; and aware that it was only through the influence of de Luynes that he could accomplish his object, he did not hesitate to bribe the favourite by an offer of the hand of his sister Eleonore de Bourbon, the widow of Philip, Prince of Orange, for his brother Cadenet. De Luynes was dazzled: an alliance with the first prince of the blood exceeded all his hopes; while the liberation of M. de Condé was, moreover, essential to his own interests; as should he secure the friendship of so powerful a noble, he would be better able to oppose not only the Duke d'Epernon, but also all the

* Henri de Gondy, master of the King's oratory, and subsequently Bishop of Paris, on the dismission of his uncle Pierre, Cardinal de Gondy, who died in 1616.

leaders of the Queen-mother's faction. It was, however, no part of his policy to betray his consciousness of this necessity to the illustrious captive; whose imprisonment he nevertheless rendered less irksome by according to him sundry relaxations from which he had hitherto been debarred. A serious indisposition by which M. de Condé was at this period attacked moreover, greatly assisted his projects; and the medical attendants of the Prince having declared that they entertained but slight hopes of his recovery, de Luynes hastened to entreat of the King that he would hold out to the invalid a prospect of deliverance, which could not fail to produce a beneficial effect upon his health. Nor did he experience any difficulty in inducing Louis to comply with his request, as personally the King bore no animosity to the Prince, whose arrest had not emanated from himself; the royal physicians were forthwith dispatched to Vincennes, with orders to exert all their skill in allaying his sufferings; and a few days subsequently the Marquis de Cadenet followed with the sword of the Prince, which he was commissioned to restore to its owner, accompanied by the assurance that so soon as his Majesty should have restored order in the kingdom, he would hasten to set him at liberty; but that, meanwhile, he begged him to take courage, and to be careful of his health.*

Cadenet was welcomed as his brother had anticipated;

* Matthieu, Hist. des Derniers Troubles, Book III, p. 639.

and was profuse in his expressions of his own respect and regard for the illustrious prisoner, and in his protestations of the untiring perseverance with which the favourite was labouring to effect his release; while Condé was equally energetic in his acknowledgments, declaring that should he owe his enlargement to de Luynes, he would prove not only to himself but to every member of his family, his deep sense of so important a service.

Relying on this assurance, the favourite, whose greatest anxiety was to prevent a good understanding between the King and his mother, had no sooner concluded the compliments and promises to which Marie had compelled herself to listen with apparent gratification, than he hastened to inform her of the pledge given by Louis to terminate the captivity of M. de Condé; craftily adding that his Majesty had hitherto failed to fulfil it, as he desired to accord this signal grace to the Prince conjointly with herself. Marie de Medicis, however, instantly comprehended the motive of her visitor; and was at no loss to understand that the liberation of a man whom she had herself committed to the Bastille, and whom she had thus converted into an enemy, was intended as a counterpoise to her own power. This conviction immediately destroyed all her trust in the sincerity of her son and his ministers; and, unable to control her emotion, she shortly afterwards dismissed de Luynes, and retired to her closet, where she summoned her

confidential friends, and declared to them that she was resolved to return with all speed to Angoulême without seeing the King.

From this dangerous determination she was, however, with some difficulty dissuaded. They, one and all, represented that she had now gone too far to recede; and reminded her that she was surrounded on every side by the royal troops, while she was herself accompanied only by the members of her household, who would be unable to offer any resistance should an attempt be made to impede her retreat; and that, consequently, her only safe system of action was passively to incur the danger which she dreaded, to dissimulate her apprehensions, and to watch carefully the progress of events.

Marie could not, in fact, adopt a wiser course. The Duke de Mayenne, who had espoused the royal cause against Epernon, was indignant at the ingratitude and coldness with which his services had been requited, and did not seek to disguise his discontent; while the nobles of Guienne, by whom he had been followed, were in an equal state of irritation. This circumstance was favourable to the Queen-mother, who lost no time in engaging the duke to make common cause with her against the favourite; a proposition to which, excited by his annoyance, he at once acceded; convinced that the projected reconciliation, could not, under existing circumstances, be of long endurance.*

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 121, 122.

On the 5th of September, Marie de Medicis accordingly left Montbazon for Consieres, where she was to have her first interview with the King; and having ascertained upon her arrival that he was walking in the park of the château, she hastily alighted and went to seek him there, followed by the Dukes de Guise, Montbazon, and de Luynes, the Cardinal de Retz, and the Archbishop of Toulouse, by whom she had been received, as well as by a dense crowd of spectators who had assembled to witness the meeting. The crowd was so great that it became necessary to clear a passage before the King could approach his mother, to whom he extended his arms, and for a few moments both parties wept without uttering a syllable. This silence was however ultimately broken by Louis, who exclaimed in a voice of deep emotion: "You are welcome, Madam. I thank God with all my heart that He has fulfilled my most ardent wish."

"And I have henceforth nothing more to desire;" replied Marie; "I shall now die happy since I have had the consolation of once more seeing you, Sire, and of embracing my other children. I have always loved you tenderly; and I entreat of you to do me the justice to believe that I have the most sincere attachment to your person, and every anxiety to promote the welfare of your kingdom."*

It is painful to reflect that these expressions, so natural from the lips of two individuals thus closely

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. v, pp. 53—56.

allied, who had been long at variance, and had at length met in amity, should have been the mere outpourings of policy; and yet, it is equally impossible not to be struck by their hollowness and falsehood; Louis being, at that very moment, endeavouring to undermine the influence of his mother by estranging from her cause all those who still clung to her altered fortunes; while Marie was labouring with equal zeal to strengthen her position, by attracting to her faction all the discontented nobles, whose individual vengeance could be gratified by opposing in her name, and apparently in her interests, the projects of those who had blighted their own prospects, or wounded their own pride.

When both parties had become more calm, Louis gave his hand to his mother, and conducted her to the château, where they remained together for the space of three hours awaiting the arrival of the young Queen, the Princess of Piedmont, and Madame Henriette, who ultimately reached Consieres, accompanied by all the princesses and great ladies of the court, occupying a train of upwards of fifty coaches; and the ceremonial of reception had no sooner terminated than the King proceeded on horseback to Tours, followed by the whole of this splendid retinue. The two Queens occupied the same carriage, and were lavish in their expressions of mutual regard and good-will; but the comedy was imperfectly acted on both sides, although neither affected to doubt the sincerity of the other. It was necessary that the piece should be played out, and the performers were skilful

enough to bring it to a close without openly betraying the distastefulness of their task.

At the supper which followed the arrival of the court at Tours, every respect was exhibited towards the Queen-mother. She was seated at the right hand of Louis, while Anne of Austria occupied a place upon his left. The Prince of Piedmont presented the *serviette*, and persisted in remaining standing, and bareheaded, although Marie desired a stool to be placed near her, and entreated him to seat himself. It is consequently needless to add that she was surrounded by adulation; and that the courtiers vied with each other in demonstrations of delight and rejoicing.

The twelve succeeding days were passed in a series of *fêtes*, of which Marie de Medicis was the heroine; but it nevertheless became evident ere the close of that period that all parties were fatigued by the efforts which they were making to conceal their real sentiments; and a return to the capital was no sooner mooted than the Queen-mother openly declared that she would not be carried to Paris in triumph, but would defer her entrance into that city until after her visit to Angers. This resolution deeply offended the King, who on taking leave of her, at once proceeded to Compiègne, while the Prince and Princess of Piedmont departed for Turin, and Marie removed to Chinon, where she remained for a few days in order to give the magistrates of Angers time to complete the preparations for her reception. At the Pont de Cé she was met by the Maréchal de Bois-

Dauphin at the head of fifteen hundred horsemen; and thus escorted she reached the gates of the city, where she was magnificently received, and welcomed with acclamations.*

De Luynes, alarmed by the protracted sojourn of the Queen-mother at Angers, and her resolute refusal to return to the capital, became more than ever anxious to effect the liberation of M. de Condé; an anxiety that was moreover heightened by intelligence which reached the court that a deputation from the Protestants, who were then holding their assembly at Loudun, had waited upon her Majesty, to express their joy at her arrival and sojourn in Anjou, and to communicate to her the demands which they were about to make to the King.

It is true that Marie, although she did not disguise her gratification at this mark of respect, was prudent enough not to advance any opinion upon the claims which they set forth, and restricted herself to offering her acknowledgments for their courtesy, coupled with the assurance that they should find her a good neighbour; but even this reply, guarded as it was, did not satisfy the court, who pretended to discover a hidden meaning in her words, and decided that she should have referred the deputation to the King, in order to place herself beyond suspicion. Nor were they less disconcerted on learning

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 453, 454. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 187, 188. Bassompierre, Mém., p. 129. Brienne, Mém., vol. i, p. 339. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. ii, pp. 306—309.

that all the nobility of the province were constant visitors at her court; and that she had established herself in her government so thoroughly that she evidently entertained no intention of abandoning her post.

As each succeeding day rendered the position of the Queen-mother more threatening towards himself, the favourite resolved towards the middle of October to effect the instant release of the Prince de Condé; and he accordingly obtained the authority of the King to proceed to Vincennes, with full power to open the gates of the fortress, and to liberate the prisoner; while Louis himself proceeded to Chantilly, the château of the Duke de Montmorency, who had married the sister of the Prince, to which residence de Luynes was instructed to conduct the emancipated noble.

It is sickening to be compelled to recapitulate the constant result of such events in that age of servility and moral degradation. The favourite, who by a word could have liberated the first prince of the blood from the Bastille before he was transferred to the fortress of Chantilly, bowed his haughty head to the dust before him, and entreated his protection; while Condé, in his turn, on being introduced into the presence of the King, demanded pardon upon his knees for an offence of which he did not even know the nature; and which he could only estimate by the extent of the chastisement that had been inflicted on him. This idle ceremony accomplished, M. de Condé immediately found himself a member of the privy council; all the honours of his rank as first prince

of the blood were accorded to him; and the King issued a declaration by which it was asserted that his recent captivity had been the act of "certain ill-advised persons who abused the name and authority of the sovereign."*

This declaration excited the indignation of the Queen-mother and Richelieu, by whose advice the arrest of Condé had been determined; but while Marie loudly expressed her displeasure, the more cautious prelate endeavoured to disguise his annoyance. He looked further into the future than his impetuous mistress, and he saw that his period of reprisal had not yet come. De Luynes, anxious to appease the Queen, declared that the obnoxious declaration had not been submitted to him before its publication, and threw the whole blame upon du Vair, by whom it was drawn up; conjuring her at the same time to return to the capital, where alone she could convince herself of his earnest desire to serve her.

The close alliance formed between Condé and the favourite sufficed, however, to deter Marie from making this concession; while many of those about her did not hesitate to insinuate that the respect with which the Prince affected to regard her person, and the desire that he expressed to see her once more at court, was a mere subterfuge; and that his real anxiety, as well as that of de Luynes, was to separate her from the nobles of Anjou, and the friends whom she possessed in her own

* Mercure Français, 1619. Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 150, 151. Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. v, pp. 59—63. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 188—191.

government, in order that she might be placed more thoroughly in their power. The Queen-mother was the more inclined to adopt this belief from the circumstance that, even while urging her return, Louis had given her to understand the inexpediency of maintaining so numerous a body-guard when she should be established in the capital as that by which she had surrounded herself since her arrival at Angers; and this evident desire on the part of the King to diminish at once her dignity and her security, coupled with her suspicions of Condé and de Luynes, rendered her more than ever averse to abandon the safe position which she then occupied, and to enter into a new struggle of which she might once more become the victim.*

On his return to Paris, after his interview with the Queen-mother, Louis bestowed the government of Picardy upon de Luynes, who resigned that of the Isle of France, which he had previously held, to the Duke de Montbazon his father-in-law. The two brothers of the favourite were created Marshals of France; Brantes by the title of Duke de Piney-Luxembourg—the heiress of that princely house having, by command of the King, bestowed her hand upon him, to the disgust of all the great nobles, who considered this ill-assorted alliance as an insult to themselves and to their order—while Cadenet, in order that he might in his turn be enabled to aspire to the promised union

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 153, 154.

with the widowed Princess of Orange, was created Duke de Chaulnes. The latter marriage was not, however, destined to be accomplished, Eleonore de Bourbon rejecting with disdain a proposition by which she felt herself dishonoured; nor can any doubt exist that her resistance was tacitly encouraged by Condé; who, once more free, could have little inclination to ally himself so closely with a family of adventurers, whose antecedents were at once obscure and equivocal. This mortification was, however, lessened to the discomfited favourite by the servility of the Archduke Albert, the sovereign of the Low Countries; who, being anxious to secure the support of the French king, offered to de Luynes the heiress of the ancient family of Piquigni in Picardy, who had been brought up at the court of Brussels, as a bride for his younger brother. Despairing, despite all his arrogance, of effecting the alliance of Cadenet with a princess of the blood, the favourite gladly accepted the proffered alliance; and M. de Chaulnes was appointed Lieutenant-General in Picardy, of which province de Luynes was the governor, and where he possessed numerous fine estates.

CHAPTER III.

[1620.]

LOUIS XIII. CREATES NUMEROUS KNIGHTS OF THE HOLY GHOST WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE WISHES OF HIS MOTHER—INDIGNATION OF MARIE DE MEDICIS — POLICY OF DE LUYNES — RICHELIEU ASPIRES TO THE CARDINALATE — A COURT QUARREL — THE COUNTESS DE SOISSONS CONSPIRES TO STRENGTHEN THE PARTY OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER — SEVERAL OF THE GREAT PRINCES PROCEED TO ANGERS TO URGE MARIE TO TAKE UP ARMS—ALARM OF THE FAVOURITE—HE SEEKS TO PROPITIATE THE DUKE DE GUISE — THE DOUBLE MARRIAGE — CAUSTIC REPLY OF THE DUKE DE GUISE—ROYAL ALLIANCES—AN EX-REGENT AND A NEW-MADE DUKE—THE QUEEN-MOTHER IS THREATENED WITH HOSTILITIES SHOULD SHE REFUSE TO RETURN IMMEDIATELY TO THE CAPITAL—SHE REMAINS INFLEXIBLE — CONDÉ ADVISES THE KING TO COMPEL HER OBEDIENCE—DE LUYNES ENTERS INTO A NEGOCIATION WITH MARIE—AN UNSKILFUL ENVOY—LOUIS XIII. HEADS HIS ARMY IN NORMANDY—ALARM OF THE REBEL PRINCES—THEY LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS, AND THE KING MARCHES UPON THE LOIRE—THE QUEEN-MOTHER PREPARES TO OPPOSE HIM—SHE GARRISONS ANGERS—THE DUKE DE MAYENNE URGES HER TO RETIRE TO GUIENNE — SHE REFUSES — TREACHERY OF RICHELIEU—LEAGUE BETWEEN RICHELIEU AND DE LUYNES — MARIE DE MEDICIS NEGOCIATES WITH THE KING — LOUIS DECLINES HER CONDITIONS—THE DEFEAT AT PONT DE CÉ—SUBMISSION OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—A ROYAL INTERVIEW—COURTLY DUPLICITY—MARIE RETIRES TO CHINON—THE DUKES OF MAYENNE AND EPERNON LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS—THE COURT ASSEMBLE AT POITIERS TO MEET THE QUEEN-MOTHER—LOUIS PROCEEDS TO GUIENNE, AND MARIE DE MEDICIS TO FONTAINEBLEAU—THE KING COMPELS THE RESUMPTION OF THE ROMISH FAITH IN BEARN—THE COURT RETURN TO PARIS.

CHAPTER III.

[1620.]

As no Chevaliers of the Order of the Holy Ghost had been created since the death of Henry IV., their number had so much decreased that only twenty-eight remained; and de Luynes, aware that himself and his brothers would necessarily be included in the next promotion, urged Louis XIII. to commence the year (1620) by conferring so coveted an honour upon the principal nobles of the kingdom. The suggestion was favourably received; and so profusely adopted, that no less than fifty-five individuals were placed upon the list, at the head of which stood the name of the Duke d'Anjou. But although some of the proudest titles in France figured in this creation, it included several of minor rank who would have been considered ineligible during the preceding reigns; a fact which was attributed to the policy of the favourite, who was anxious to render so signal a distinction less onerous in his own case and

that of his relatives; while others were omitted whose indignation at this slight increased the ranks of the malcontents.*

Marie de Medicis, who had not yet forgiven the royal declaration in favour of the Prince de Condé, was additionally irritated that these honours should have been conceded without her participation; for she immediately perceived that the intention of the favourite had been to reserve to himself the credit of obtaining so signal a distinction for the noblemen and gentlemen upon whom it was conferred, and to render her own helplessness more apparent. As such an outrage required, however, some palliation, and that de Luynes was anxious not to drive the Queen-mother to extremity, he induced the King to forward for her inspection the names of those who were about to receive the blue ribbon, offering at the same time to include one or two of her personal adherents should she desire it; but when, in running her eye over the list, Marie perceived that, in addition to the deliberate affront involved in a delay which only enabled her to acquire the knowledge of an event of this importance after all the preliminary arrangements were completed, it had been carefully collated so as to exclude all those who had espoused her own cause, and to admit several who were known to be obnoxious to her, she coldly replied that she had no addition to make to the orders of the King, and

* Mercure Français, 1620. Pièces Curieuses faites durant le Règne du Connétable de Luynes, pp. 1—3.

returned the document in the same state as she had received it.*

The indignation expressed by the Queen-mother on this occasion was skilfully increased by Richelieu, who began to apprehend that so long as Marie remained inactively in her government he should find no opportunity of furthering his own fortunes; while, at the same time, he was anxious to revenge himself upon de Luynes, who had promised to recompense his treachery to his royal mistress by a seat in the conclave; and it had been confided to him that the first vacant seat was pledged to the Archbishop of Toulouse, the son of the Duke d'Epernon. In order, therefore, at once to indulge his vengeance, and to render his services more than ever essential to the favourite, and thus wring from his fears what he could not anticipate from his good-faith, he resolved to exasperate the spirit of the Queen-mother, and to incite her to open rebellion against her son and his government.

Circumstances favoured his project. The two first princes of the blood, M. de Condé and the Count de Soissons, had at this period a serious quarrel, as to who should present the finger-napkin to the King at the dinner-table; Condé claiming that privilege as first

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. v, pp. 70—72. Vie du Duc d'Epernon, Book VIII. Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 458. Fontenay, Mém., p. 458. Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 183, 184. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. ii, pp. 397, 398.

prince of the blood, and Soissons maintaining that it was his right as grand-master of the royal household. The two great nobles, heedless of the presence of the sovereign, each seized a corner of the *serviette*, which he refused to relinquish; and the quarrel became at length so loud and so unseemly that Louis endeavoured to restore peace by commanding that it should be presented by his brother the Duke d'Anjou; but although the two angry princes were compelled to yield the object of contention, he could not reduce them to silence; and this absurd dissension immediately split the court into two factions; the Duke de Guise and the friends of the favourite declaring themselves for Condé; while Mayenne, Longueville, and several others, espoused the cause of the Count de Soissons.

It is almost ludicrous to be compelled to record that from a quarrel, originating in a servile endeavour on the part of the two principal nobles of a great nation to usurp the functions of a *maître-d'hôtel*, germinated an attempt at civil war, which, had not the treachery of Richelieu nipped it in the bud, might have involved France in a sanguinary and unnatural series of conflicts that would have rendered France a frightful spectacle to all Europe. Thus it was, however; for the Countess de Soissons, the mother of the young Prince, who was then only in his seventeenth year, eagerly seized so favourable an opportunity to weaken the party of the Prince de Condé, whose sudden influence threatened the future prospects of her son, by attaching to the

cause of Marie de Medicis all the nobles who were opposed to the favourite, and consequently to the first prince of the blood by whom he was supported in his pretensions.

The ambition of the countess was to obtain for her young son the hand of Madame Henriette de France, the third sister of the King; an alliance which she was aware would be strenuously opposed by Condé, and which she could only hope to accomplish through the good offices of the Queen-mother; and it was consequently essential that, in order to carry out her views, she should labour to augment the faction of Marie. Her efforts were successful; between the 29th of March and the 30th of June, the Dukes of Mayenne and Vendôme, the Grand-Prior (the brother of the latter), the Count de Candale, the Archbishop of Toulouse, and Henry of Savoy, Duke de Nemours, all proceeded to Angers; an example which was speedily followed by the Count and Countess de Soissons, and the Dukes of Longueville, Trémouille, Retz, and Rohan; who, one and all, urged Marie de Medicis once more to take up arms, and assert her authority.*

These successive defections greatly alarmed the favourite, who became more than ever urgent for the return of the Queen-mother to the capital; but a consciousness of her increasing power, together with the insidious advice of Richelieu, rendered her deaf alike to

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 183, 184. Fontenay, Mém., pp. 461—467.

his representations and to his promises. In this extremity de Luynes resolved to leave no means untried to regain the Duke de Guise; and for this purpose, the King was easily persuaded to propose a double marriage in his family, by which it was believed that his own allegiance and that of the Prince de Condé to the royal cause, or rather to that of the favourite, would be alike secured. M. de Condé was to give his daughter to the Prince de Joinville the elder son of M. de Guise; while his third son the Duke de Joyeuse was to become the husband of Mademoiselle de Luynes. The marriage articles were accordingly drawn up, although the two latter personages were still infants at the breast; but when he took the pen in his hand to sign the contract, de Guise hesitated, and appeared to reflect.

"What are you thinking of, Monsieur le Duc?" inquired Louis, as he remarked the hesitation of the Prince.

"I protest to you, Sire;" was the reply; "that, while looking at the name of the bride, I had forgotten my own, and that I was seeking to recal it."

De Luynes bit his lips and turned away, while a general smile proved how thoroughly the meaning of the haughty duke had been appreciated by the courtiers.*

In addition to these comparatively unimportant

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. v, pp. 106—108. Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 186, 187.

alliances, two others of a more serious nature were also mooted at this period, namely, those of Monsieur the King's brother with Mademoiselle de Montpensier, the daughter of the Duchess de Guise; and of Madame Henriette de France with the Count de Soissons; a double project which afforded to the favourite an admirable pretext for dispatching Brantes, the newly-created Duke de Luxembourg, to Angers, to solicit the consent of the Queen-mother, and to entreat her to reappear at court, and thus sanction by her presence the decision of the sovereign.

"The King has determined wisely;" was her reply; "and the affair can be concluded when I am once more in the capital. I feel satisfied that his Majesty will not decide upon either of the marriages during my absence; but will remember not merely what is due to me as a Queen, but also as a mother."

"Am I then authorised to state, Madam, that you will shortly arrive at Paris?" demanded the envoy.

"I shall immediately return, Sir;" coldly replied Marie; "when I can do so with honour; but this can only be when the King shall have issued a declaration which may repair the injury done to my administration in that which he conceded to the Prince de Condé."

The duke attempted to remonstrate, but he was haughtily silenced; and thus saw himself compelled to retire from the presence of the irritated Princess with

the conviction that he had utterly failed to produce the effect anticipated from his mission.*

As a last resource the Duke de Montbazon was once more dispatched to the Queen-mother, with full authority to satisfy all her demands, whatever might be their nature; and also with instructions to menace her that, should she still refuse to obey the commands of the King, she would be compelled to do so; while, at the same time, he was commissioned to announce that Louis was ready to receive her at Tours, as he had formerly done, in order to convince her of his anxiety to terminate their misunderstanding. This portion of his mission was, however, strongly combated alike by M. de Condé and the ministers, who saw in it a proof of weakness unworthy of a great sovereign; but the apprehensions of the favourite so far outweighed his sense of what was due to the dignity of his royal master, that he refused to listen to their representations, and Louis accordingly left the capital, and advanced slowly towards the Angoumais, awaiting the result of this new negociation.

Marie remained inflexible; Richelieu had not yet accomplished his object; and the King, who had already reached Orleans, returned to Paris to the great triumph of the Queen-mother's faction. Months were wasted in this puerile struggle, which contrasted

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 186, 187. Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. v, pp. 106—110.

strangely with the important interests which at that period occupied the attention of all the European sovereigns; and meanwhile the faction of Marie de Medicis became more formidable from day to day; until, finally, the Prince de Condé declared his conviction that stringent measures could alone secure to the sovereign any hope of averting the serious consequences with which he was threatened by the disaffection of his most powerful nobles. De Luynes was quite ready to adopt this reasoning in order to insure his own safety; but it met with earnest opposition from the Cardinal de Retz, Arnoux, and many others of the favourite's confidential friends, who dreaded that by the fall of Marie de Medicis, Condé, whose ambitious views were evident to all, would attain to a degree of authority and power against which they could not hope successfully to contend; and they accordingly counselled their patron rather to effect his own reconciliation with the exiled Queen, and by rendering himself necessary alike to the mother and the son, at once to strengthen his own influence, and to weaken that of the first prince of the blood.

In accordance with this advice de Luynes entered into a negociation with Marie, during the course of which the Marquis de Blainville was dispatched several times to Angers, authorised to hold out the most brilliant promises, should she consent to resume her position at the French court. Unfortunately, how-

ever, the zealous envoy overacted his part by assuring her that de Luynes was strongly attached to her person, and anxious only to secure her interests; a declaration which instantly startled her susceptible temper into additional caution; but his next step proved even more fatal to the cause he had been deputed to advocate.

"I can assure you, Madam;" he went on to say, encouraged by the attentive attitude of his royal auditor; "that M. le Duc has ever entertained the most perfect respect towards your Majesty. More than once, indeed, it has been suggested to him to secure your person, and either to commit you to Vincennes, or to compel your return to Florence; nay, more; a few of your most inveterate enemies, Madam, have not hesitated to advise still more violent measures, and have endeavoured to convince him that his own safety could only be secured by your destruction; but M. de Luynes has universally rejected these counsels with indignation and horror; and this fact must suffice to prove to your Majesty that you can have nothing to apprehend from a man so devoted to your cause that he has undeviatingly made his own interests subservient to yours."

This argument, which while it revolted her good sense, revealed to the Queen-mother the whole extent of the risk that she must inevitably incur by placing herself in the power of an individual who had suffered such measures to be mooted in his councils, produced

the very opposite effect to that which it had been intended to elicit; and it was consequently with a more fixed determination than ever that Marie clung to the comparatively independent position she had secured, and thus rendered the negociation useless.*

The alarm of de Luynes increased after this failure, and having become convinced of the impolicy of provoking a second civil war, he continued his attempts at a reconciliation through other channels; but as each in turn proved abortive, he began to tremble lest by affording more time for the consolidation of the Queen's faction, he might ultimately work his own overthrow; and it was consequently determined that the advice of the Prince de Condé should be adopted. The delay which had already taken place had, however, sufficed to permit a coalition among the princes which rendered the party of the malcontents more formidable than any which had yet been opposed to the royal authority; and it was not without considerable misgivings that, early in July, de Luynes accompanied the King to the frontier of Normandy, where it had been decided that he should place himself at the head of his army.†

Before leaving the capital it was considered expedient that Louis should attend a meeting of the

* Siri, Mém. Recon., 1620, pp. 110—122.

† Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 206. Pontchartrain, Mém., p. 313. Fontenay, Mém., p. 462. Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 462, 463. Matthieu, Hist. des Derniers Troubles, Book iii, p. 650.

Parliament, in order to justify the extreme step which he was about to take; and he accordingly presented himself before that body, to whom he declared the excessive repugnance with which he found himself under the imperative necessity of taking up arms against the Queen his mother, and excused himself upon the plea of her having headed the malcontents, by whom the safety of the throne and kingdom was endangered; and, this empty formality accomplished, little attention was conceded to the recommendation of the president and advocate-general, who implored of his Majesty to adopt less offensive measures, and to avoid so long as it might be in his power an open war with his august parent.* Louis had complied with the ceremony required of him; and while de Luynes was trembling for his tenure of power, the young sovereign was equally anxious to commence a campaign which promised some relief from the tedium of his every-day existence, and some prospect of his definitive release from the thraldom of the adverse faction.

The success of the royal army exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the young sovereign, and awakened in him that passion for war by which he was subsequently distinguished throughout the whole of his reign. The Dukes of Longueville and Vendôme, alarmed by a manifestation of energy for

* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 202. Mercure Français, 16201—621.

which they were not prepared, and fearing the effects of further resistance, scarcely made an effort to oppose him; and thus, in an incredibly short space of time, he possessed himself of Rouen, Caen, Alençon, and Vendôme; and advanced upon the Loire at the head of his whole army.

This unlooked-for celerity caused the greatest consternation in the party of Marie, who had anticipated that the conquest of Normandy would have occupied the royal forces during a considerable period, and relying on this contingency, had not yet completed the defences of Angers. The Queen herself, however, continued to refuse all overtures of reconciliation, and after having vainly demanded a month's truce, she turned her whole attention to the formation of such an army as might enable her to compete with that by which she saw herself assailed. Her forces already amounted to fifteen hundred horse and eight thousand infantry, and she was anticipating a strong reinforcement, which was to be supplied by the Duke de Rohan and the Count de Saint-Aignan. Her first care was to garrison the town and citadel of Angers, in order to secure her personal safety; but this precaution did not satisfy the Duke de Mayenne, who urged her to retire to Guienne, where he had collected a force of ten thousand men, and thus to place herself beyond all possibility of capture. The Duke d'Epernon, on the other hand, who was jealous of the influence which such a step must necessarily give to his rival, strongly dissuaded

the Queen from condescending to retreat before the royal army; and suggested that M. de Mayenne would more effectually serve her cause and uphold her honour by marching his troops to Angers, and thus strengthening her position. This suggestion, by whatever motive it were prompted, was one of sound policy; nor can there be any doubt that it would have been readily adopted by Marie de Medicis, had there not been a traitor in the camp, whose covert schemes must have been foiled by such an addition to the faction of his royal mistress.

That traitor was Richelieu, by whom every movement in the rebel army, and every decision of the Queen-mother's council, was immediately revealed to de Luynes. The wily bishop, faithful to his own interests, and lured onward by the vision of a cardinal's hat, no sooner saw the impression produced upon the mind of Marie by the proposal of Epernon than he hastened to oppose a measure which threatened all his hopes; and succeeded with some difficulty in persuading her that both these great nobles could more effectually serve her in their own governments, than by adding an useless burthen to her dower-city which was already gorged with troops, and which, in the event of a siege might suffer more from internal scarcity than external violence.

Bewildered by the danger of the struggle which was about to supervene, Marie de Medicis was readily induced to believe in the wisdom of securing two

havens of refuge in case of defeat, and to renounce the peril of hazarding all at one blow. The arguments of Richelieu were specious; she had the most perfect faith in his attachment and fidelity; and thus, despite the most earnest remonstrances of her other counsellors, she decided upon following the suggestions of the man who was seeking to build up his own fortunes upon the ruin of her cause.*

Neither Richelieu nor de Luynes were deceived as to the feeling which thus induced them to make common cause. There was no affectation of regard or confidence on either side; their mutual hatred was matter of notoriety, but they were essential to each other. Without the aid of the favourite, the Bishop of Luçon could never hope to attain the seat in the conclave which was the paramount object of his ambition; while de Luynes on his side was apprehensive that should the army of the King be defeated, his own overthrow must necessarily result; or, in the event of success, that the Prince de Condé would become all-powerful: an alternative which presented the same danger to his own prospects. Thus, both the one and the other, convinced that by stratagem alone they could carry out their personal views, eagerly entered into a secret negociation, which terminated in a pledge that Richelieu should

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 206, 207. Lumières pour l'Hist. de France. Bernard, Book III.

succeed to a cardinalate provided he delivered up his too confiding mistress to the royal troops when they marched upon the Pont de Cé.

This fortress, which protected the passage to Anjou, was only a league distant from Angers, where the Queen-mother had taken up her residence; and Richelieu, to whom its safety had been confided, no sooner effected a final understanding with de Luynes, than he removed all the ammunition from the fortress, and placed his own relatives and friends in command of the garrison, with full instructions as to the part which they were to enact when confronted with the troops of the sovereign.

Although wholly unsuspicious of the treachery of which she was thus destined to become the victim, the alarm of the Queen-mother was excited by the rapid approach of her son, and she at length resolved to attempt a tardy reconciliation; for which purpose she dispatched the Duke de Bellegarde, the Archbishop of Sens, and the Jesuit Bérulle to the King with an offer to that effect. Louis received her envoys with great courtesy, and declared himself ready to make every concession as regarded Marie personally, and even to extend his pardon to the Count and Countess de Soissons; but he peremptorily refused to include the other disaffected nobles in the amnesty; while the Queen, on her side, declined every arrangement which involved the abandonment of her followers; and thus the nego-

ciation failed in its object, while the royal army continued to advance.*

On reaching La Flêche the King convened a council, at which it was proposed to besiege the city of Angers; but Louis, who was aware of the plot that had been formed between de Luynes and Richelieu, declared that his respect for his mother would not permit him to attack a town in which she had taken up her abode; while he even instructed the Duke de Bellegarde to propose to her fresh conditions of peace, and to assure her that his intention in approaching so near to her stronghold was simply to secure an interview, and to induce her to return with him to the capital.

This assurance produced the desired effect upon Marie de Medicis, who was becoming alike wearied and disgusted by the perilous position in which she had been placed by the unexpected energy of her son; and who consequently hastened to sign the treaty. But the concession came too late. On the previous day, Bassompierre, Créquy, and several other officers of rank marched to Sorges, within a league of Pont de Cé, at the head of their men, for the mere purpose of skirmishing; they, however, met with no opposition; and they finally reached the bridge, where five thousand troops of the Queen-mother were entrenched. These they attacked; and at the third charge the whole body fled in such confusion that the royal forces entered with them pell-mell

* Mercure Français, 1620. Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. v, pp. 135—137. Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 212, 213.

into the city. The command of the fort had been given to the Duke de Retz, who, apprised by the Cardinal his uncle that the Queen-mother was betrayed, hastily effected his escape, and the castle was surrendered at the first summons. In vain did the Duke de Bellegarde represent that the town had been taken after the Queen had signed the treaty of reconciliation, and complain that this outrage had been committed subsequently to the conclusion of a peace proposed by the sovereign; the Prince de Condé, desirous to mortify Marie de Medicis, only replied that the messenger should have made better haste to deliver so important a document, as the King's officers were not called upon to divine the nature of the Queen's decision.*

On the following day Louis himself entered Pont de Cé, where he was surprised to find the shops open, and the inhabitants as quietly pursuing their avocations as though no rumour of war had reached their ears. The shouts of "Vive le Roi!" were as energetic as those of "Vive la Reine!" had been only a few weeks previously; and thus, through the selfish treason of two ambitious and unprincipled individuals, Marie de Medicis, who at once felt that all further opposition must be fruitless, saw the powerful faction which it had cost her so much difficulty and so hard a struggle to combine, totally overthrown; and herself reduced, even while she still possessed an army of thirty thousand

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 213. Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 210.

men in Poitou, Angoûmais, and Guienne, to accept such conditions as it might please the King to accord to her.

Bewildered by the defeat of her troops and the loss of Pont de Cé, the unhappy Queen resolved to effect her escape, and to throw herself on the protection of the Dukes of Mayenne and Epernon; but this project was defeated by Richelieu, who lost no time in communicating her intentions to the favourite; and parties of cavalry were in consequence thrown out in every direction to oppose her passage. Apprised of this precaution, although unconscious of its origin, Marie at once felt that she had no alternative save submission; and she accordingly declared herself ready to obey the will of the King, whatever might be its nature; an assurance to which Louis replied that he was ready to receive her with open arms, and to grant her requests in so far as they regarded herself personally, although he was resolved to prove to the leaders of her faction that he was the master of his own kingdom.*

On the conclusion of the treaty, a meeting was appointed between the King and his mother at the castle of Brissac, whither he repaired to await her arrival; and she was no sooner made acquainted with this arrangement than she hastened to the place of rendezvous, escorted by five hundred horsemen of the

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 213, 214. Mercure Français, 1620. Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. v, pp. 139, 140. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 210, 211.

royal army. She was met midway by the Maréchal de Praslin, and a short time afterwards by the Duke de Luxembourg, at the head of a strong party of nobles, by whom she was warmly welcomed; and, finally, when she was within a few hundred yards of the castle, Louis himself appeared; who, as her litter approached, alighted in his turn, an example which she immediately followed, and in the next instant they were clasped in each other's arms.

"I have you now, Madam;" exclaimed the King with a somewhat equivocal smile; "and you shall not escape me again."

"Sire;" replied the Queen; "you will have little trouble in retaining me, for I meet you with the firm determination never more to leave you, and in perfect confidence that I shall be treated with all the kindness and consideration which I can hope from so good a son."

These hollow compliments exchanged, Louis retired a pace or two in order to enable the Prince de Condé and the Duke de Luynes to pay their respects to the Queen-mother, by whom they were most graciously received; while Richelieu was no less warmly greeted by the young King and his favourite. No one, in fine, who had witnessed the scene, could have imagined that heart-burning and hatred were concealed beneath the smiles and blandishments which were to be encountered on all sides; or that among those who then and there bandied honied words and gracious greetings, were to

be found individuals who had staked their whole future fortunes upon a perilous venture, and many who had lost.

After a few days spent at Brissac the King departed for Poitou, while Marie repaired to Chinon, whence she was to follow him in a few days; and thus terminated the second exile of the widow of Henry the Great, even as the first had done, in mortification and defeat.*

As a matter of course, the Dukes of Mayenne and Epernon no sooner saw that the cause of the Queen-mother had become hopeless than they hastened to make their submission to the King; although the former, fearing that his known hostility to the favourite might militate against his future interests, first endeavoured to induce M. d'Epernon to join him in forming a new faction for their personal protection; but this attempt met with no encouragement, Epernon declaring that as his royal mistress had seen fit to trust to the clemency of the sovereign, he felt bound to follow her example; and that he advised M. de Mayenne to adopt the same course. Such a reply naturally sufficed to convince his colleague that he had no other alternative; and after the professions usual on such occasions both nobles prepared to lay down their arms.†

* Mercure Français, 1620. Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. v, pp. 140, 141. Brienne, Mém., vol. i, pp. 342, 343. Bassompierre, Mém., édit. Petitot, vol. ii, pp. 193—199.

† Vie du Duc d'Epernon, Book VIII. Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 216, 217.

Louis having learnt at Poitiers that the Queen was on her way to join him, immediately proceeded to Tours to await her arrival, and to conduct her to the former city, whither she accompanied him with all the great ladies of the court; and four days subsequently Marie de Medicis followed with her slender retinue. She was welcomed by Anne of Austria with haughty courtesy; and during the ensuing week all was revelry and dissipation. The young Queen gave a splendid ball in honour of her august mother-in-law; and on the morrow the Jesuits performed a comedy at which all the court were present.

It is probable, however, that Marie de Medicis did not enter with much zest into these diversions, as she could not fail to perceive that the courtesy evinced towards her was reluctant and constrained; and when on the arrival of the Duke de Mayenne, she witnessed the coldness of his reception, her fears for her own future welfare must have been considerably augmented. At his first audience Mayenne threw himself at the feet of the King, protesting his sorrow for the past, and imploring the royal pardon with all the humility of a criminal, but Louis alike feared and hated the veteran leaguer, and he replied harshly: ".Enough, M. le Duc; I will forget the past should the future give me cause to do so." And as he ceased speaking he turned away, leaving the mortified noble to rise at his leisure from the lowly attitude which he had assumed.*

* Mercure Français, 1620.

Two days subsequently the King resumed his journey to Guienne, Marie de Medicis proceeded to Fontainebleau, and Anne of Austria returned to Paris. As Louis reached Chizé he was met by the Duke d'Epernon; who, in his turn, sued for forgiveness, which was accorded without difficulty; and thus the Queen-mother found herself deprived of her two most efficient protectors,* and clung more tenaciously than ever to the support of the treacherous Richelieu.

The next care of Louis was to compel the resumption of the Roman Catholic religion in Bearn; after which he followed the court to the capital, whither he had already been preceded by the Queen-mother.

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 217. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 212, 213.

CHAPTER IV.

[1621—24.]

ATTEMPT TO SECURE A CARDINAL'S HAT FOR RICHELIEU FRUSTRATED BY DE LUYNES — DEATH OF PHILIP III. OF SPAIN — DE LUYNES IS CREATED CONSTABLE OF FRANCE—DISCONTENT OF THE GREAT NOBLES—DISGUST OF THE MARÉCHAL DE LESDIGUIÈRES—THE PROTESTANTS OF BEARN RISE AGAINST THEIR OPPRESSORS—THE ROYAL TROOPS MARCH AGAINST THEM — THEY ARE WORSTED, AND DESPOILED OF THEIR FORTIFIED PLACES—THE KING BECOMES JEALOUS OF HIS FAVOURITE—"LE ROI LUYNES" — DOMESTIC DISSENSIONS — THE FAVOURITE IS THREATENED WITH DISGRACE—CRUELTY OF LOUIS XIII.—DEATH OF DE LUYNES—LOUIS DETERMINES TO EXTERMINATE THE PROTESTANTS—A STRUGGLE FOR POWER — PRUDENCE OF BASSOMPIERRE — CONDÉ ENCOURAGES THE DESIGN OF THE KING—THE OLD MINISTERS ARE RECALLED—THEY JOIN WITH THE QUEEN-MOTHER IN HER ATTEMPT TO CONCLUDE A PEACE WITH THE REFORMED PARTY — MARIE DE MEDICIS SOLICITS A SHARE IN THE GOVERNMENT—THE KING COMPLIES, BUT REFUSES TO SANCTION THE ADMISSION OF RICHELIEU TO THE COUNCIL—THE DUCHESS DE LUYNES AND ANNE OF AUSTRIA—FRUSTRATED HOPES—CONDÉ ASPIRES TO THE FRENCH THRONE—LOUIS XIII. LEAVES THE CAPITAL BY STEALTH IN ORDER TO JOIN THE ARMY AT NANTES—THE QUEEN-MOTHER PREPARES TO FOLLOW HIM, BUT IS OVERTAKEN BY ILLNESS — RUTHLESS PERSECUTION OF THE PROTESTANTS —SIEGE OF LA ROCHELLE—VENALITY OF THE PROTESTANT LEADERS—INDIGNATION OF THE CATHOLIC NOBLES—RESISTANCE OF THE CITIZENS OF MONTPELLIER—MILITARY INCAPACITY OF CONDÉ—THE DUKE DE ROHAN NEGOCIATES A PEACE, AND CONDÉ RETIRES TO ROME — MONTPELLIER OPENS ITS GATES TO THE KING — BAD FAITH OF LOUIS XIII.—TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF THE KING AT LYONS—MARRIAGE OF THE MARQUIS DE LA VALETTE AND MADEMOISELLE DE VERNEUIL —RICHELIEU IS CREATED A CARDINAL—EXULTATION OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER — DEATH OF THE PRESIDENT JEANNIN — PROSPECTS OF RICHELIEU—HIS DUPLICITY—MISPLACED CONFIDENCE OF MARIE DE

MEDICIS—LOUIS XIII. RETURNS TO PARIS—CHANGE IN THE MINISTRY —ANNE OF AUSTRIA AND THE PRINCE OF WALES—THE QUEEN-MOTHER AND HER FACTION ENDEAVOUR TO ACCOMPLISH THE RUIN OF THE CHANCELLOR, AND SUCCEED—RICHELIEU IS ADMITTED TO THE COUNCIL —INDIGNATION OF CONDÉ — RICHELIEU BECOMES ALL-POWERFUL — HIS INGRATITUDE TO THE QUEEN-MOTHER—THE QUEEN-MOTHER IS ANXIOUS TO EFFECT A MATRIMONIAL ALLIANCE WITH ENGLAND — RICHELIEU SECONDS HER VIEWS—THE KING OF SPAIN APPLIES FOR THE HAND OF THE PRINCESS HENRIETTE FOR DOM CARLOS — HIS DEMAND IS NEGATIVED BY THE CARDINAL-MINISTER — VIEUVILLE IS DISMISSED FROM THE MINISTRY — DUPLICITY OF LOUIS XIII.— ARREST OF VIEUVILLE—CHANGE OF MINISTERS—PETTICOAT INTRIGUES — THE DUKE D'ANJOU SOLICITS THE HAND OF MADEMOISELLE DE MONTPENSIER — THE ALLIANCE IS OPPOSED BY THE GUISES AND FORBIDDEN BY THE KING.

CHAPTER IV.

[1621—24.]

DURING the absence of the King from Paris, the Maréchal d'Estrées, who was at that period ambassador at Rome, was engaged in soliciting two seats in the conclave, the first for the Archbishop of Toulouse, and the second for the Bishop of Luçon; while Marie de Medicis lost no opportunity of entreating Bentivoglio, the papal nuncio, to further the interests of the latter, impressing upon him that no period could be more favourable than the present, when Louis XIII. had enforced upon a whole refractory province the performance of the rites which it had so long rejected. To this argument the Cardinal had nothing to object, and he accordingly listened with complacency to her representations; but they were rendered abortive by de Luynes, who privately informed him that neither the sovereign nor himself sincerely desired the promotion of Richelieu; and that their apparent anxiety for his

advancement had been merely assumed to gratify the Queen-mother; while, far from being disposed to consider the dissent of the Pontiff to this application as a slight, his Majesty would be gratified should he reject it, as he had reason to feel dissatisfied with the Bishop of Luçon, whom he was consequently not disposed to support in an ambition which he considered to be at once inordinate and premature. Paul V. needed no further hint; he had been unwilling to countenance the elevation of two French prelates, and accordingly he replied to all the urgent solicitations of M. d'Estrées with evasive replies; until at length, wearied by his pertinacity, he laid before him a letter from Louis himself wherein he revoked all his former orders. The indignation of the ambassador was only exceeded by that of Richelieu when they mutually discovered that they had been duped; but the death of the Pope, and the election of Gregory XV., which occurred in the following month (February), once more renewed their hopes.

The demise of Paul V. was followed by that of Philip III. of Spain, and negociations were immediately commenced with his successor for the restoration of the Valteline to the Grisons, which were happily concluded for the moment; but whatever satisfaction this event might have elicited at the court of France, was counterbalanced by another, in which the great nobles felt a more personal and intimate interest. On the 2nd of April, Charles Albert Duke de Luynes was invested with the sword of Constable of France; and thus in the

short space of four years, without having distinguished himself either as a warrior or a statesman, had risen from the obscure position of a gentleman of the household, and the petty noble of a province, to the highest dignity which could be conferred upon a subject.

The ceremony of his investiture was conducted with extraordinary pomp; and when he had taken the oath, de Luynes received from the hands of the King a sword richly ornamented with diamonds, which was buckled on by Gaston, Duke d'Anjou.* The murmurs elicited by this extraordinary promotion were universal; and the rather as it had long been promised to the Duke de Lesdiguières, who was compelled to content himself with a brevet of Marshal of France, and the title of colonel-general of the royal army, which constituted the veteran soldier the lieutenant of de Luynes, who had never been upon a field of battle.†

The remainder of the year was occupied in a campaign against the Protestants, who, on the departure of the King from Bearn, had rallied in the defence of their religion, and revolted against the outrages to which they had been subjected by a lawless rabble. Their churches had been desecrated and burnt down at Tours, Poitiers, and other cities, themselves publicly insulted, and they began to apprehend that they were about to be despoiled of all the privileges accorded to them by the Edict of Nantes. Under these circum-

* Mercure Français, 1621. Bernard, Book v.

† Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 221, 222.

stances they had convoked a general assembly at La Rochelle, in order to decide upon the measures necessary to their preservation; and although warned immediately to dissolve the meeting, they had refused compliance with the royal edict, even while aware that they were not strong enough to contend with any prospect of ultimate success.*

The new constable eagerly seized this opportunity of exerting his authority, and an army of forty thousand infantry and eight thousand horse was marched towards the Loire; at the head of which were the King himself, de Luynes, and the Maréchal de Lesdiguières; while, as though the projected expedition had been a mere party of pleasure, not only did a crowd of the great nobles volunteer to swell the ranks of the already gigantic force, but the two Queens, the Duchess de Luynes, and a numerous suite of ladies also accompanied the troops to share in the campaign. The result of this fearful contention is known. The unhappy Protestants were driven from their strongholds; and with the exception of Montauban, which was so gallantly defended that the King was ultimately compelled to raise the seige, they found themselves utterly despoiled, and exposed to every species of insult.

No event could have been more unfortunate for the ambitious constable than the successful defence of Montauban. Louis loved war for its own sake, but

* Richelieu, Mém., Book xii, pp. 118—128. Rohan, Book ii, pp. 183—185. Bazin, vol. ii, pp. 132—138.

he was also jealous of success; and he felt with great bitterness this first mortification. He had, moreover, become conscious that he was a mere puppet in the hands of his ambitious favourite; and he was already becoming weary of a moral vassalage of which he had been unable to calculate the extent. As the brilliant connétable flashed past him, glittering with gold, the plumes of his helmet dancing in the wind, and the housings of his charger sparkling with gems, he looked after him with a contemptuous scowl, and bade the nobles among whom he stood admire the regal bearing of *le Roi Luynes;* nor was he the less bitter because he could not suppress a consciousness of his own disability to dispense with the services of the man whom he thus criticised.

Upon one point Louis XIII. greatly resembled his mother: with all his arrogance and love of power, he possessed no innate strength of purpose, and constantly required extraneous support; but it was already easy for those about him to perceive that fear alone continued to link him with the once all-powerful favourite. Rumour said, moreover, that superadded to the jealousy which the King entertained of the daily-increasing assumption of the constable there existed another cause of discontent. The Duchess de Luynes was, as we have said, both beautiful and fascinating, and Louis had not been proof against her attractions, although his ideas of gallantry never overstepped the bounds of the most scrupulous propriety; the lady

had on her part welcomed his homage with more warmth than discretion; and the favourite had not failed to reproach her for a levity by which he considered himself dishonoured. Madame de Luynes had retorted in no measured terms; and the young sovereign, who detested to find himself involved in affairs of this nature, and who had, moreover, reason to believe that he was not the only individual favoured by the smiles of the attractive beauty, soon evinced an aversion towards both husband and wife, which encouraged the enemies of de Luynes to hint that the reverse which his Majesty had lately suffered at Montauban might be entirely attributed to the incapacity and selfishness of the constable. This opinion soothed the wounded vanity of the King; and he talked vehemently of his regret for the brave men who had fallen, among whom was the Duke de Mayenne; and bitterly complained of the dishonour to which he had been subjected; while, in order to revenge himself at once upon de Luynes and the duchess, he condescended to the meanness of informing the former that the Prince de Joinville was enamoured of his wife; and subsequently boasted to Bassompierre that he had done so. The marquis listened in astonishment to this extraordinary communication; and, in reply, ventured to assure his Majesty that he had committed a serious error in seeking to cause a misunderstanding between a married couple.

"God will forgive me for it should He see fit to do so;" was the sullen retort of Louis; "at all events it

gave me great pleasure to be revenged on him, and to cause him this annoyance; and before six months have elapsed I will make him disgorge all his gains."*

The rumour of his projected disgrace soon reached the ears of the bewildered favourite, who instantly resolved to redeem himself by some more successful achievement. He accordingly ordered the troops to march upon and besiege Monheur, an insignificant town on the Garonne, which was feebly garrisoned by two hundred and sixty men, and which was in consequence sure to fall into his hands. As he had foreseen, the place soon capitulated; but the late reverse had rendered Louis less accessible than ever to the claims of mercy; and although by the terms of the treaty he found himself compelled to spare the lives of the troops, numbers of the inhabitants were put to death, and the town was sacked and burned.† This paltry triumph did not, however, suffice to reinstate the connétable in the good graces of his royal master, who continued to indulge in the most puerile complaints against his former favourite, whose mortification at so sudden and unexpected a reverse of fortune so seriously affected his health, that while the ruins of the ill-fated town were still smouldering, he expired in an adjacent village of a purpurine fever which had already caused considerable ravages in the royal army.

* Bassompierre, Mém., vol. ii, pp. 493, 494.

† Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 421. Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 492, 493. Bassompierre, Mém., vol. ii, p. 358.

When intelligence of the decease of de Luynes was communicated to the King, he did not even affect the slightest regret; and the courtiers at once perceived that the demise of the man upon whom he had lavished so many and such unmerited distinctions, was regarded by Louis as a well-timed release. So careless indeed did the resentful monarch show himself of the common observances of decency, that he gave no directions for his burial; and, profiting by this omission, the enemies of the unfortunate constable pillaged his residence, and carried off every article of value, not leaving him even a sheet to supply his grave-clothes. The Maréchal de Chaulnes and the Duke de Luxembourg, his brothers, with whom at his first entrance into life he had shared his slender income, and whom in his after-days of prosperity he had alike ennobled and enriched, looked on in silence upon this desecration of his remains, lest by resenting the outrage they should incur the coldness of the King; and it is on record that the Abbé Rucellaï, and one of his friends, alone had the courage and generosity to furnish the necessary funds for enbalming the body, and effecting its transport to its last resting-place.*

The resolute position still maintained by the Protestants chafed the arrogant temper of Louis XIII., who, although personally incapable of sustaining the royal authority, was yet jealous of its privileges. Political and civil liberty was in his eyes a heresy to be exterminated at whatever cost; and while infirm in purpose as a child,

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 421. Mercure Français, 1621.

he grasped at absolute monarchy; and panted to acquire it. This, as he at once felt, could never be achieved while there existed within his kingdom a party which assumed to limit his prerogative, and to maintain the rights which it had acquired under his predecessors, and thus he eagerly resolved to rid himself of so dangerous an enemy; but, although his determination was formed, he found himself unequal to the self-imposed task; he had no reliance on his own strength; and until he had elected a new favourite upon whom he could lean for support, he dared not venture upon so serious an undertaking.

There were, however, many candidates for the vacant honour; and de Luynes was scarcely in his grave ere two separate parties began to strive for pre-eminence. That of the ministers was headed by Henry de Gondy, Cardinal de Retz, president of the council, Schomberg, grand-master of the artillery and superintendent of finance, and de Vic, keeper of the seals, who exerted all their efforts to dissuade the King from again placing himself in the power of a favourite, believing that should he consent to retain the government in his own hands, they need only flatter his foibles to secure to themselves the actual administration of the kingdom; a policy which they commenced by urging him to follow up his intention of pursuing the war against the Protestants.

On the other hand, the courtiers who were anxious for peace, and who desired to see Louis once more quietly established in his capital, were earnest that he should advance Bassompierre to the coveted dignity;

nor were they without sanguine hope of success, as even before the death of de Luynes, the wit, courage, and magnificence of the courtly soldier had captivated the admiration of the King, who had evinced towards him a greater portion of regard than he vouchsafed to any other noble of his suite; while so conscious were the ministers of this preference, that in order to rid themselves of so dangerous an adversary, and to effect his removal from the court, they offered to Bassompierre the lieutenancy of Guienne and the *bâton* of a maréchal. These honours were, however, declined; not from ambition, for Bassompierre, although brave in the field, was a devoted votary of pleasure, and the court was his world; but he was wise enough to feel that he did not possess the necessary talent for so perilous a post as that which his friends would fain have assigned to him; and he was the first to declare that the intrigues of both parties would fail, since the King must ere long fall, as a natural consequence, under the dominion of his mother, or that of the Prince de Condé.*

On the 28th of January Louis re-entered Paris, where he was received with enthusiasm; and the meeting between the mother and son was highly satisfactory to both parties. In compliance with the advice of Richelieu, Marie de Medicis exhibited towards the young sovereign a deferential tenderness and a modest exultation, which flattered his vanity, and disarmed his apprehensions. No allusion was made to the past, save such as

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 497, 498.

afforded opportunity for adulation and triumph; Louis began to look upon himself as a conqueror, and the Queen-mother already entertained visions of renewed power and authority.

So soon as the death of de Luynes had been made known to M. de Condé, he had hastened to meet the King, in order to forestal the influence of Marie. Aware that she anxiously desired a termination of the war, he threw himself into the cabal of the ministers, and urged Louis to complete the work which he had so ably commenced, by compelling the Protestants to evacuate La Rochelle, Montauban, and Royan, the only fortified towns of which they still remained in possession; conscious that should he succeed in once more involving the country in civil war, his royal kinsman would not be able to dispense with his own support.

Louis had, however, recalled Jeannin and Sillery to his councils, both of whom were jealous of the Prince, and wounded by his arrogance, and who did not consequently hesitate to advise the King to offer conditions to the reformed party, and to endeavour to conclude a peace; while Marie de Medicis earnestly seconded their views, expressing at the same time her desire to become once more associated in the government.

To her extreme mortification Louis hesitated; he had resolved to share his authority only with his favourites, and he was aware that Marie would not enter into their views; while he was equally averse to permit the interference of Richelieu, whose power over

the mind of the Queen-mother was matter of notoriety. In this dilemma he appealed to the two ministers, who, eager to counteract the influence of Condé, urged him to accede to her wishes; representing at the same time the danger which he must incur by exciting her displeasure, and thus inducing her to oppose his measures. When he urged the powerlessness to which she was reduced by her late reverses, they respectfully reminded him that her faction, although dispersed for the moment, was by no means annihilated; nor did they fail to impress upon him that her adhesion would be necessary in order to enable him to counteract the pretensions of the Prince de Condé, who had already given evidence of his anxiety to place himself at the head of affairs, and to govern the nation in his name. This argument prevailed. The Queen-mother was admitted to the council on the understanding that the Bishop of Luçon should be excluded; and she accepted the condition without comment, feeling convinced that when she had succeeded in establishing her own position, she should find little difficulty in accomplishing all minor measures.*

Madame de Luynes had no sooner ascertained that she had irretrievably lost the favour of the King than she devoted herself to Anne of Austria, who was soon induced to forget her previous jealousy, and to whom her society ere long became indispensable. In many

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 230—232.

respects the tastes of the girl-Queen and the brilliant widow of the connétable were singularly similar, although Anne was a mere tyro in gallantry beside her more experienced friend. Both were young, handsome, and giddy; greedy of admiration, and regardless of the comments of those about them; and never perhaps did any princess of Spain more thoroughly divest herself of the *morgue* peculiar to her nation than the wife of Louis XIII., whose court set all etiquette at defiance which interfered with the amusement of the hour. In vain did the King and his mother expostulate; Anne of Austria merely pouted and persisted; and even her panegyrist, Madame de Motteville, has recorded that she did not hesitate in after-years to admit that she had numbered among her adorers the Duke de Montmorency, who previously to the passion with which she inspired him had been the devoted slave of the beautiful Marquise de Sablé;* the Duke de Bellegarde, of whose antiquated worship she made for a while the jest of her circle, and her own pastime; and, finally, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who, mistaking her levity for a more tender feeling, was presumptuous and reckless enough to endanger her reputation;† while her imprudent encouragement of the attentions of Richelieu, which subsequently caused her so much and

* Marguerite de Souvré, Marquise de Sablé, was the wife of Philip Emmanuel de Laval-Montmorency. She died in 1678, in her seventy-sixth year.

† Motteville, Mém., vol. i, pp. 340—342.

such bitter suffering, has also become matter of history. In addition to Madame de Luynes, Anne of Austria had adopted as her especial favourites the intriguing Princess de Conti, and Mademoiselle de Verneuil the natural sister of the King; and while Louis was absorbed by visions of absolute empire, and meditating the destruction of his Protestant subjects, the private circle of the Queen was loud with revelry, and indulging in amusement to the very verge of impropriety.

At the period of the sovereign's return to Paris, hopes were entertained that Anne would shortly give an heir to the French throne; and, while Marie de Medicis, whose policy it had been to maintain the coldness and indifference of the royal couple, was trembling at the increase of influence which could not fail to accrue to the young Queen should she become the mother of a Dauphin, Louis was impatiently anticipating the moment which would enable him to present to his good citizens of Paris a successor to his regal honours. Great therefore was his consternation when he was apprised that the Queen, while running across the great hall of the Louvre with Madame de Luynes and Mademoiselle de Verneuil, had fallen and injured herself so severely that all hopes of a Dauphin were for the moment at an end.

In the first paroxysm of his anger, he ordered the two ladies, whom he, perhaps justly, regarded as the cause of the accident, to quit the palace within three days on pain of his most serious displeasure; but the duchess, to whom exile from the court was equivalent

to a death-warrant, lost no time in dispatching a messenger to the Prince de Joinville, (who had recently assumed the title of Duke de Joyeuse,) entreating him to exert all his influence to save her from this disgrace; nor did she make the appeal in vain. The Prince, who was devotedly attached to her, at once declared himself her champion; and, despite the advice of his friends, not only induced Louis to rescind his order, but offered his hand to the lady, who subsequently became celebrated as Duchess de Chevreuse; and together with her own pardon also obtained that of Mademoiselle de Verneuil, with permission to both parties to retain their position in the Queen's household.*

Meanwhile the Prince de Condé continued to urge upon the King the expediency of following up his project of aggression against the Protestants, and proposed to him that he should join the army with Monsieur his brother, leaving Marie de Medicis in the capital; for which advice many designing and unworthy motives were attributed to him by his enemies. As an immediate consequence, such an arrangement must naturally have tended to increase the dependence of the young sovereign upon himself; while the late accident of the Queen having removed all prospect of a new heir to the throne, should the chances of war prove fatal to the King and the Duke d'Anjou, the crown of France became the legitimate right of Condé himself. What

* Bassompierre, Mém., vol. ii, p. 376. Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 499, 500.

tended to strengthen the belief that the Prince actually contemplated such a result, was the fact that it had been predicted to him by an astrologer that at the age of four-and-thirty he would be King of France; and the superstition so common at the time caused considerable faith to be placed in the prophecy, not only by himself but by many of his friends. Condé had now attained to within a year of the stated period; and as a few months previously Louis had been seriously indisposed, while the Duke d'Anjou had barely escaped with life from an illness which he had not yet thoroughly conquered, not a doubt was entertained by the party opposed to him, that his great anxiety to see himself at the head of an army arose from his conviction that in such a position he should be the more readily enabled to enforce his pretensions.*

Be his motives what they might, however, the ministers, who were anxious that Louis should absent himself from the capital before he fell under the dominion of a new favourite who might thwart their own views, zealously seconded the advice of M. de Condé; and although Marie de Medicis strenuously opposed the renewal of civil warfare, and the Duke de Lesdiguières represented to the King the ardent desire of the Protestants to conclude a peace, all their efforts were impotent to counteract the pernicious counsels of the Prince, which were destined to darken

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 232, 23. Sismondi, Hist. des Français, vol. xxii, p. 501.

and desecrate all the after-reign of Louis XIII. Marie then endeavoured to dissuade the King from heading his troops in person; or, should he persist in this design, at least to forego that of leaving her in the capital, and of exposing Monsieur to the dangers of the campaign. All that she could obtain was a promise that the Duke d'Anjou should remain in Paris; while as Louis had named no precise period for his own departure it was believed that he would not leave the city before the termination of the Easter festival, and that meanwhile circumstances might occur to induce him to change his resolution. But while Marie de Medicis indulged in this hope, the same anticipation had produced a different effect upon the minds of Condé and his party, who secretly urged upon the King that longer delay could only tend to afford facilities to the Protestants of strengthening their faction, and consequently their means of resistance, an argument which determined Louis at once to carry out his project; and so alarmed was the Prince lest some circumstance might supervene to impede the departure of the monarch, that he finally induced him to have recourse to the undignified expedient of quitting the Louvre by a back entrance at dusk on Palm Sunday; and of proceeding to Orleans, where he remained until the close of Easter, awaiting the arrival of the great officers of his household, who had no sooner joined him than he embarked with the troops who had been stationed there, and hastened

with all possible speed to Nantes, where he appointed the Prince de Condé lieutenant-general of his army.*

The indignation of the Queen-mother was unbounded when she became apprised of the evasion of the King, which she at once attributed to the anxiety of M. de Condé to remove him beyond her own influence, and she consequently made immediate preparations for following the royal fugitive; but although she exerted all her energy to accomplish this object, her mental agitation overcame her physical strength; and when she reached the town of Nantes, which Louis had already quitted, she was unable to proceed further, and was compelled by indisposition to remain inactive, and to leave her adversaries in possession of the field.

The war which supervened was one of great triumph to the royal army, if indeed the massacre of his own subjects can reflect glory upon a sovereign; but the laurels gained by Louis and his troops were sullied by a series of atrocious and profitless cruelties which made them matter of reproach rather than of praise. In vain did the Maréchal de Lesdiguières, the Duke de Bouillon, and even Sully who had once controlled the destinies of France, make repeated offers of submission, the Prince de Condé had sufficient influence over the infatuated King to render every appeal useless, and to induce him to persist in the wholesale slaughter of the unhappy Protestants.

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 457.

In the affair of La Rochelle alone Bassompierre informs us that "there died upon the field, killed in cold blood, and without resistance, more than fifteen hundred men, while more than as many prisoners were taken who were sent to the galleys: the rest were put to death by the followers of M. de la Rochefoucault and by the peasantry. So that M. de Soubise re-entered La Rochelle with thirty horsemen out of the seven hundred whom he had with him, and not four hundred infantry of the seven thousand who comprised his army on the preceding day."*

The leaders of the Protestants, some alarmed for their personal safety, and others gained over by the offers of the court, began to desert the cause for which they had so long contended, and to make terms with the sovereign. The Duke de la Force sold himself for two hundred thousand crowns and the *bâton* of a marshal; the Duke de Sully, after repeated delays, surrendered his fortress of Cadenac; the veteran de Lesdiguières abandoned not only his friends but also his faith for the sword of Constable of France; and finally the Marquis de Châtillon, the grandson of the brave and murdered Coligni, delivered himself up together with the stronghold of Aigues Mortes; thus leaving no men of mark among the reformers, save the two brothers MM. de Soubise and de Rohan; the former of whom was then in England soliciting the

* Bassompierre, Mém., vol. ii, p. 389.

assistance of James I., while the latter was endeavouring to raise troops in the Cevennes for the protection of Montpellier and Nîmes, both which cities were threatened with siege.*

The favours accorded to the renegade Protestant leaders having caused great dissatisfaction among the Catholic nobles of Louis XIII., the King found himself compelled to gratify those also by honours and emolument. The Duke d'Epernon was made Governor of Guienne, a province which had never hitherto been bestowed save on a prince of the blood; while Bassompierre succeeded to the marshal's *bâton* vacated by Lesdiguières on his promotion; and M. de Schomberg was invested with the governments of Angoumois and Limousin.

Towards the close of August the troops marched upon Montpellier, but the arrival of the new constable excited the jealousy of Condé, who refused to submit to his authority. Lesdiguières, who although he had abandoned his faith had not yet ceased to feel a lively interest in the cause of his late co-religionists, was eager to effect a peace, and for this purpose had conferred with the Duke de Rohan, who was equally anxious to obtain the same result; but for a considerable time the threatened cities refused to listen to any compromise. At length, however, the representations of Rohan prevailed, and the negociation was nearly completed when M. de Condé haughtily declared

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 504—506.

that whatever might be the conditions conceded by the King and the Connétable, he would deliver over the city to pillage so soon as he had entered the gates. The citizens of Montpellier, who were aware that despite the capitulations made with other places, the most enormous atrocities had been committed in the towns which had surrendered, persisted in their turn that they would only admit Lesdiguières within their walls, provided he were accompanied neither by Louis nor the Prince de Condé, a resolution which excited the indignation of the King; and the negociation consequently failed. The constable returned to Guienne, and once more M. de Condé found himself in undisputed command of the royal army.

The incapacity of the Prince, the casualties of war, and the sickness which manifested itself among the troops, had, however, greatly tended to weaken the military resources of the sovereign ; the Cardinal de Retz and de Vic, the keeper of the seals, had both fallen victims to disease; while numbers of the nobility had been killed; and de Rohan, with his usual perspicuity, decided that the moment had now arrived in which, could he ever hope to do so, he might be enabled to effect the desired treaty. Louis, who had become weary of the overweening pretensions and haughty dictation of Condé, secretly encouraged him to persist in his attempt; and the duke immediately exerted himself to prevail upon the inhabitants of Montpellier to receive his Majesty into their city.

While he was thus engaged, the Prince, who soon discovered from the altered demeanour of the King, that he should be unable to prevent the conclusion of a peace, resolved to absent himself from the army. He had been apprised by his emissaries of the recal of Lesdiguières, and he at once comprehended that the presence of the Connétable could be required for no other purpose than that of weakening his own authority, and of thwarting his own views; and acting upon this conviction, he did not hesitate to inform Louis that he was aware of the projected return of the veteran noble; adding, that as he could not bring himself to obey the orders of an individual so greatly his inferior in birth, he preferred retiring for a time to Italy, should his Majesty graciously accord him permission to absent himself. Louis required no entreaties to concede this favour to his arrogant kinsman; and, accordingly, to the undisguised satisfaction of the harassed army, the Prince departed for Rome; the Duke de Lesdiguières replaced him in his command; and, finally, the King having acceded to the conditions demanded by the citizens of the beleaguered town, they consented to receive him within their walls, provided that at his departure he withdrew the whole of his troops.

All the terms of the treaty were observed, save this last demand. An edict of pacification was duly signed and registered; and Louis, in the month of November, quitted Montpellier with the bulk of his army, but left two regiments in garrison within the very heart of the

city. The Protestants were, however, too weary of warfare, and too much exhausted by suffering, to resent this infraction of their rights; and they consequently saw the King set forth for Lyons without expostulation or remonstrance.* Had they been enabled to make a final effort, it is probable that they might have imposed still more favourable conditions, as after the departure of Condé Louis relapsed into his usual helplessness; for although perfectly competent to direct the manœuvres of a body of troops on a review-ground, he was totally unequal to command an army; and, with the littleness of a narrow mind, he was at the same time jealous of his generals; neither was he competent to comprehend either the precise political position of his own kingdom, or that of Europe; and thus, although he assumed an appearance of authority, so soon as the controlling influence of the paramount favourite was withdrawn, his powers were paralyzed, and he no longer possessed any defined principle of action.

The entry of the King at Lyons was celebrated with the utmost magnificence. Had he achieved the conquest of half Europe he could not have been greeted with more enthusiasm than awaited him on this occasion, when his hand still reeked with the blood of hundreds of his own subjects, and the groans of injured women and slaughtered children were still crying to Heaven for vengeance. Triumphal arches, ecclesiastical and muni-

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 510—512. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 238—240.

cipal processions, salvos of artillery, flourishes of trumpets, all the pomp and circumstance of war blent with the splendour of triumph, awaited him on his arrival in that city. The two Queens with their separate courts, and the Duke and Duchess of Savoy with a brilliant retinue, were assembled to give him welcome; and while the houseless inhabitants of Montpellier and the smouldering villages of Guienne were wandering about the ruins of their once happy and prosperous homes, the streets of Lyons swarmed with velvet-clad courtiers and jewelled dames, hurrying from ball to banquet, and wholly absorbed in frivolity and pleasure. Theatrical performances took place every evening; and on the 12th of November the three courts assisted at the marriage of Mademoiselle de Verneuil and the Marquis de la Valette, the second son of the Duke d'Epernon, which was celebrated with great pomp. The King presented to his sister a dowry of two hundred thousand crowns, to which the marquise, her mother, added one hundred thousand more. This union was followed by that of Madame de Luynes with the Prince de Joinville; and the two marriages were followed by Italian comedies, fireworks, and public illuminations.*

The most important event, however, which occurred during the sojourn of the King at Lyons, was the admission of the Bishop of Luçon to the conclave. The long-coveted hat was forwarded to the French sovereign

* Bassompierre, Mém., vol. ii, p. 492. Brienne, Mém., vol. i, p. 371. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 242, 243.

by Gregory XV., from whose hands it was received by Richelieu. The Queen-mother triumphed; but neither Louis nor his ministers felt the same exultation as Marie and her favourite; for guardedly as the new Cardinal had borne himself while awaiting this honour, his spirit of intrigue had already become notorious, and his extraordinary talents excited alarm rather than confidence. The death of the Cardinal de Retz, which had occurred while the King was with the army in Languedoc, had created two important vacancies; one in the Holy College, and the other in the royal council, to both of which the astute Richelieu aspired; but Louis, urged by his ministers, decidedly refused to admit him to the privy council, and he was fain to content himself for the moment with the honours of the scarlet hat, while M. de la Rochefoucault was appointed to the vacant seat in the council.

The President Jeannin had died in the month of October, at the ripe age of eighty-two; a demise which was followed by those of de Vic, the keeper of the seals, and the Duke de Bouillon; and thus three stumbling-blocks had been removed from the path of Richelieu, whose professions of attachment to Marie de Medicis became more fervent than ever; while he was meanwhile carefully measuring the strength of those to whom he was opposed, studying the foibles of the King, and gradually forming a party at court which might enable him to secure his own ultimate elevation, and to render himself independent of her protection.

The ceremony of his admission to the conclave had no sooner been concluded in the chapel of the archbishop's palace, than Richelieu hastened to place the symbol of his new dignity at the feet of his benefactress.

"Madam;" he said, at the close of an harangue full of the most exaggerated declarations of devotion to her person; "this honour, for which I am indebted to the benevolence of your Majesty, will ever cause me to bear in mind the solemn vow I have made to shed my blood in your service."

Marie listened and believed; and in addition to the scarlet hat, and the dignity of minister of state which it involved, the deceived Princess in the short space of a few months bestowed upon her future enemy the enormous sum of nine hundred thousand crowns, besides sacerdotal plate to an almost incredible amount. No timely presentiment warned her how the "solemn vow" was to be observed; and the influence of the selfish and unprincipled churchman became greater than ever.*

The King did not return to Paris until the 10th of January (1623), and shortly after his arrival another change took place in the ministry. Schomberg had excited the animosity of the Chancellor Sillery, his son the Marquis de Puisieux, (who, since the death of de Luynes, had risen greatly in the favour of Louis,) and the Marquis de Caumartin,† who, on the demise

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 525.

† Louis le Febvre, Marquis de Caumartin, president of the

of M. de Vic, had been appointed keeper of the seals. He was also avowedly obnoxious to M. de la Vieuville,* the adjutant-general of the royal army; and these nobles combined to effect his ruin. As, however, M. de Schomberg was protected by the Prince de Condé, the conspirators were for a time compelled to forego their purpose, but the Prince had no sooner taken his departure for Italy, than they hastened to poison the mind of the King against his finance-minister; an attempt in which they so easily succeeded, that although Schomberg undertook to prove the fallacy of every charge which was brought against him, Louis refused to admit his justification, and he was dismissed from his charge, which was conferred upon de la Vieuville; while by the death of Caumartin, which shortly afterwards occurred, Sillery once more found himself in possession of the seals. His triumph was, however, of short duration, the King having conceived an extraordinary aversion to the chancellor, although he was aware that he could not safely dispense with his services; and, accordingly, a short time subsequently, the seals were again reclaimed, and bestowed upon M. d'Aligre.†

privy council, and keeper of the seals in 1622, died in the following year at the age of seventy-two. He was a man of great talent, and an able politician.

* Charles de la Vieuville, subsequently created duke.

† Etienne d'Aligre was a native of Chartres, and owed his advancement in life solely to his great talents. He became

On the return of Louis XIII. to the capital, Anne of Austria organised two magnificent ballets, one of which was danced in the apartments of the King, and the other in her own. It was hinted that these splendid entertainments were given in order to impress Lord Holland with a high idea of the splendour of the French court, that nobleman having been instructed by James I. to endeavour to effect a marriage between the Prince of Wales and Madame Elisabeth; and great was the astonishment of the royal party when they ascertained that the Prince himself, attended by the Duke of Buckingham, had been present incognito, both personages being disguised with false beards and enormously bushy wigs; and that, after remaining only one day in Paris, they had pursued their journey to Spain, where Charles was about to demand the hand of the Infanta. It was, moreover, afterwards ascertained that having arrived in the French capital on the evening before that of the royal ballet, the Prince and his companions had gone disguised to the Louvre to see the Queen-mother at table, and had introduced themselves as travelling nobles into a gallery in which Louis was walking surrounded by his courtiers; after which they had induced the Duke de

successively steward of the household to the Cardinal Charles de Bourbon, councillor of state, keeper of the seals, and subsequently, on the death of M. de Sillery, Chancellor of France. Two years afterwards, having resigned the seals, he retired to one of his estates, where he died on the 11th of December, 1635, at the age of seventy-five years.

Montbazon to allow them to enter the hall in which the festival was to take place. There Charles saw for the first time the young Queen of Louis XIII., with the portrait of whose sister he had become enamoured, and also Madame Henriette, who was subsequently destined to become his wife. But it would appear that the French princess whom he so tenderly loved in after-years, made, on this occasion, no impression upon his mind; as, still eager to convince himself that the Spanish Infanta was as beautiful as the miniature in his possession, he set forth on the following day for Madrid, as he had originally intended.*

La Vieuville and his party, (at the head of which figured the Queen-mother, who could not brook that Louis should retain about his person a minister whose influence counterbalanced her own,) began in the spring of 1624 to make new efforts to effect the disgrace of the veteran chancellor and his son M. de Puisieux; both of whom had moreover incurred the hatred of Richelieu by their endeavours to oppose his admission to the conclave; and the continual representations of the cabal soon produced so marked an alteration in the bearing of the King towards Sillery, that the latter resolved not to await the dismissal which he foresaw would not be long delayed. Pretexting, therefore, his great age—for he had attained his eightieth year—and his serious sufferings from gout, by which he was disabled from

* Brienne, Mém., vol. i, pp. 373, 374. Bassompierre, Mém., vol. iii, p. 6. Le Vassor, vol. ii, pp. 546, 547.

following his Majesty in his perpetual journeys to the provinces, he entreated permission to retire from the government, an indulgence which was conceded without difficulty; and the seals transferred, as we have already stated, to M. d'Aligre; and although Louis continued to treat Puisieux with studied courtesy, the rival faction soon discovered that his favour was at an end. On several occasions the King gave audiences to the different foreign ambassadors without desiring his presence, although as secretary of state it had hitherto been considered indispensable; and finally, both father and son were informed that they were at liberty to quit the court.

The exultation of Marie de Medicis at their dismissal was undisguised, and she immediately took measures to secure the admission of Richelieu to the ministry; for which purpose she endeavoured to secure the interests of La Vieuville. For a time, however, the finance-minister declined to second her views, as neither he nor his colleagues were desirous of the co-operation of a man whom they distrusted; but Marie who would suffer no repulse, at length succeeded in overcoming his repugnance, and he was ultimately induced to urge upon the King the expediency of compliance with the wishes of his mother; although under certain restrictions, which might tend to curb the intriguing and ambitious spirit of the enterprising candidate.

At this period, the court was sojourning at Com-

piègne; and on one occasion, as Louis, according to his custom, paid his morning visit to the Queen-mother in her sleeping-apartment, he announced to her extreme delight that he had appointed the Cardinal de Richelieu councillor of state; warning her, however, that he must rest satisfied with a subordinate authority, and not permit himself to suggest measures which had not previously been considered by the King himself.

That Louis nevertheless made this concession with reluctance, is evidenced by the fact that he forthwith wrote to M. de Condé, who was then residing at Bourges, to invite him to return to court in order to counterbalance the influence of the Queen-mother, which the admission of her favourite to the privy council could not fail greatly to augment. The appeal was, however, fruitless; the Prince considering himself aggrieved not only by the elevation of an individual to whom he justly attributed his imprisonment in the Bastille, but also by the increased power of Marie de Medicis; and he consequently coldly returned his thanks for the desire evinced by his royal kinsman to see him once more near his person, but declared his intention of remaining in his government.*

From this period, the prominent figure upon the canvas of the time is Richelieu. He it was who negociated the marriage of the Prince of Wales with Madame Henriette, after the alliance with Spain had been abandoned by James I. To him the Marquis de la Vieuville

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 260—263. Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 534.

owed his disgrace; and by his representations the Queen-mother enlisted the young Prince Gaston d'Anjou in his interests. All bent, or was crushed before him; he had affected to accept office reluctantly: pleaded his physical weakness, even while he admitted his mental strength, declaring that his bodily infirmities incapacitated him from collision with the toil and turmoil of state affairs; and coquetted with the honours for which he had striven throughout long years until he almost succeeded in inducing those about him to believe that he sacrificed his own inclinations to the will of the sovereign and his mother.* But history has proved that having once possessed himself of the supreme power, and moulded the mind of his royal master to his own purposes, he flung off all restraint, and governed the nation like a monarch; while its legitimate sovereign obeyed his behests, and made peace or war as the necessity of either measure was dictated to him by his imperious minister.

And amid all this pomp of power and pride of place, how did the purple-robed politician regard the generous benefactress who had furthered his brilliant fortunes? It cannot be forgotten that the wretched Concini had been his first patron; and that when one word of warning from his lips might have saved the maréchal from assassination, those lips had remained closed; that he had even affected to slumber with the death-warrant of the victim beneath his pillow, and had striven to rise

* Richelieu, Book xv, pp. 284—286.

upon his ruin. The after-career of Richelieu did not belie its commencement. The glorious talents with which Heaven had gifted him festered into a curse beneath his ambition: he became the marvel of the whole civilized world, and the scourge of those who trusted in his truth.

That Marie was as eager as Richelieu himself for the alliance with England is undoubted; for while the former, whose enlarged political views led him to seek through this medium to curb the growing power of Austria and Spain, looked only to the aggrandizement of the nation which he served, the Queen-mother was equally anxious to secure for herself a safe asylum in the event of any new reverse; and consequently on this particular subject they acted in unison; the Cardinal openly striving to attain his own object, and Marie de Medicis secretly negociating at the court of St. James' to effect a marriage by which she believed that she should ensure her future safety.

The difference of religion between the contracting parties necessarily induced considerable difficulties, but as these were never, at that period, suffered to interfere with any great question of national policy, Richelieu unhesitatingly undertook to obtain the consent of the Sovereign-Pontiff; who, as the minister had foreseen, finally accorded the required dispensation; nor was he deterred from his purpose by the opposition of the Spanish monarch, who caused his ambassador to assure Marie de Medicis that, in the event of her inducing the King to bestow the hand of the Princess Henriette

upon the Infant Dom Carlos, he would secure to that Prince the sovereignty of the Catholic Low Countries on the demise of the Archduchess Isabella, and that meanwhile the royal couple could take up their abode at Brussels under the guardianship of that Princess.*

The Queen-mother, however, placed no faith in the sincerity of this promise; while Richelieu met it by an instant negative, declaring that: "every one was aware that Spain was like a canker which gnawed and devoured every substance to which it attached itself."† And meanwhile Louis, glad to have once more found an individual alike able and willing to take upon himself the responsibility of government, suffered the Cardinal to pursue his negociation with England. The dowry demanded by James with the Princess was eight hundred thousand crowns, half of which was to be paid down on the eve of the marriage, and the remainder within eighteen months; while it was further stipulated that, in the event of her dying before her husband, and without issue, a moiety only of the entire sum was to be repaid by the Prince.

During the progress of this treaty, the Marquis de la Vieuville, whose sudden elevation had created for him a host of virulent and active enemies, was suddenly dismissed. Although not gifted with remarkable talents, M. de Vieuville was a man of uprightness and integrity,

* Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 615. Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. v, pp. 595, 596.

† Richelieu, Book xv, p. 296.

who commenced his office as superintendent of finance by reducing the exorbitant salaries and pensions of the great officers of state and other nobles. This was not, however, his worst crime. Well aware of the constitutional timidity of the monarch, he had assumed an authority which rendered him odious to all those whose ambition prompted them to essay their own powers of governing; and among these, as a natural consequence, was the Cardinal de Richelieu, who, despising the abilities of the finance-minister, chafed under his own inferiority of place, and did not fail to imbue the Queen-mother with the same feeling. Vieuville was accused of arrogating to himself an amount of authority wholly incompatible with his office; and it is impossible to suppress a smile while contemplating the fact that this accusation was brought against him by the very individual who, only a few months subsequently, ruled both the monarch and the nation with a rod of iron.

The desired end was, however, attained. Weak and vain, as well as personally incompetent, Louis XIII. was easily led to fear those upon whom he had himself conferred the power of lessening his own authority; and as so many interests were involved in the overthrow of de Vieuville, it was soon decided. Fearful of betraying his own personal views, Richelieu took no active measures in this dismissal, nor were any such needed; as, in addition to his other errors, the finance-minister had, by a singular want of judgment, excited against himself the anger and indignation of

Monsieur, by committing his governor, Colonel d'Ornano, to the Bastille, upon the pretext that he had instigated the Prince to demand admission to the council in order that he might obtain a knowledge of public affairs, but with the sole intention of procuring his own access to the government. The jealousy of Louis was at once aroused by this assurance; and the arrest of his brother's friend and confidant had, as a natural consequence, resulted from the ill-advised representation; an insult which Gaston so violently resented that he forthwith entered into the cabal against de Vieuville, and thus seconded the views of the Queen-mother, who was anxious to replace the obnoxious minister by the Cardinal de Richelieu.

True to his character, when, on being apprised of the powerful faction formed against him, de Vieuville resolved to tender his resignation, and thus to deprive his enemies of the triumph of causing his disgrace, for which purpose he proceeded to declare to the King his desire to withdraw from the high office which had been conferred upon him, Louis XIII. simply replied: "Make yourself perfectly easy, and pay no attention to what is going forward. When I have no longer occasion for your services, I will tell you so myself; and you shall have my permission to come and take leave of me before your departure."

On the following day M. de Vieuville accordingly presented himself as usual during the sitting of the privy council, when the King abruptly exclaimed: "I

redeem the promise which I made to tell you when I could dispense with your services. I have resolved to do so; and you are at liberty to take your leave." The ex-minister, bewildered by so extraordinary a reception, attempted no rejoinder, but hastened to quit the royal presence. He had, however, no sooner reached the gallery than he was arrested by the Marquis de Thermes, and conveyed as a prisoner to the citadel of Amboise, whence he made his escape a year afterwards.*

The result of this arrest was a total change in the aspect of the court. M. de Marillac† succeeded to the vacant superintendence of finance; the Count de Schomberg was recalled to the capital, and made a member of the privy council; d'Ornano was liberated from the Bastille, restored to his position in the household of the Duke d'Anjou, and honoured with a marshal's *bâton;* while, to complete the moral revolution, Richelieu was appointed chief of the council, and became,

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 267—269. Le Vassor, vol. ii, p. 621.

† Michel de Marillac was born in 1563. He was successively counsellor in the Parliament of Paris, master of the Court of Requests, councillor of state, superintendent of finance, and keeper of the seals (1626). Four years subsequently he was involved in the disgrace of his brother the Maréchal de Marillac, and was compelled to resign the seals (1630). He was then conveyed to the fortress of Caën, whence he was finally removed to that of Châteaudun, where he died of grief on the 7th of August, 1632. He was the author of the "Code Michau," a translation of the Psalms into French verse, and several other works.

as the Queen-mother had anticipated, all-powerful over the weak and timid spirit of the King under his new character of minister of state.

Fully occupied as the Cardinal might have found himself by the foreign wars into which his ambition ere long plunged his royal master, he was nevertheless compelled to turn his attention to the intrigues of certain great ladies of the court, which threatened internal dissension, and in which the two Queens ultimately became involved. The young Duke d'Anjou, whose prepossessing manners and handsome person had rendered him universally popular, began about this time to awaken the distrust and jealousy of the King; a feeling which was heightened by the marked preference evinced by Marie de Medicis for her younger son. The marriage of the Prince with the wealthy heiress of Montpensier, whose mother had espoused the Duke de Guise, had long been decided; but as Gaston had hitherto evinced the utmost indifference towards his destined bride the subject had elicited little attention. Suddenly, however, this indifference gave place to the most marked admiration; and it became evident that he was seriously contemplating an alliance with the Princess who had been designed for him by his father. In so trivial and dissolute a court as that of France at this period it is needless to remark to how many fears and regrets such a resolution immediately gave birth; nor was it long ere two separate cabals were formed; the one favouring, and the other seeking to impede, the marriage. Passion and party-

feeling overthrew every barrier of decency and dignity; and from this moment may be traced that insurmountable aversion which Louis XIII. subsequently exhibited alike towards the Queen his wife and the Prince his brother.

It no sooner became apparent to the court circle that the Princess de Conti gave perpetual entertainments, in order to afford constant opportunity to Gaston to converse with Mademoiselle de Montpensier, than the enemies of the Guises leagued together to inspire the King with their own fears, declaring that such an accession of influence as must accrue to that haughty house by an alliance with the heir-presumptive, threatened the stability of the throne; representations which were rendered the more powerful by the extraordinary fact that the Duchess de Joyeuse, who was herself the wife of a younger brother of the Guises, and the Marquise de la Valette, whose husband was a near relation of the Princess de Montpensier, were both loud in their entreaties that the brother of the King should not be permitted to contract the alliance which he contemplated. But while Louis was bewildered by this seeming contradiction, Richelieu thoroughly appreciated its real motive, being well aware of the inimity which existed between Mesdames de Joyeuse and de la Valette and the Princess de Conti, who had long ceased to dissemble their dislike; and who were consequently overjoyed to oppose any undertaking to which the adverse party was pledged.

The two former ladies, who were the most confidential friends of the young Queen, found little difficulty in exciting her alarm, and in inducing her to assist them in their endeavours to thwart a marriage, by which, as they asserted, her own personal interests were threatened; nor did they scruple to remind her that in the event of the King's demise, an event which his feeble constitution and frequent indisposition rendered far from improbable, it was necessary to her own future welfare that the heir-presumptive to the crown should remain unmarried as long as possible.

"What must be your fate, Madam;" they insidiously urged; "should his Majesty die without issue? Should you be willing to retire to a cloister while Mademoiselle de Montpensier took your place upon the throne? Or, even supposing that the King survives, and that you continue childless while the Prince becomes the father of a son whom all France will regard as its future sovereign, how will you be able to brook the comparative insignificance to which you must be reduced? You will do well to consider these things; and to remember that, in the event of your widowhood, your interest requires that the successor of your present consort should be in a position to secure to you the same station which you now hold."

These artful representations produced the desired effect upon the mind of Anne of Austria, who, alike haughty and vain, could not brook to anticipate any diminution of her dignity; and she accordingly lost no

time in impressing upon Louis the danger to which he would expose himself by allowing his brother to form an alliance that could not fail to balance his own power in the kingdom. Naturally jealous and distrustful, the King listened eagerly to her reasoning; and while the young Prince continued to pay his court each day more assiduously to the noble and wealthy heiress, the adverse faction, under the sanction of the sovereign, were labouring no less zealously to contravene his views. In conjunction with the Queen, there were not wanting several individuals who, moreover, pointed out to the monarch that should Gaston be permitted to accomplish the contemplated marriage, he would be thus enabled to gain over the still existing leaders of the League, and the party of the Prince de Condé, who, already disaffected towards his own person, would not fail to embrace the interests of his brother. More and more alarmed by each succeeding argument, Louis forthwith summoned M. d'Ornano to his presence, and peremptorily commanded him to put an immediate stop to the intrigues which were going on upon the subject of the projected alliance; and to forbid the Prince, in his name, to form any engagement with Mademoiselle de Montpensier.*

Few orders could have been more agreeable to the governor of Gaston; who, aware that both Richelieu and the Queen-mother ardently desired the accomplishment

* Le Vassor, édit. 1717, vol. v, pp. 110—112. Bassompierre, vol. iii, p. 13—15. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, p. 12. Fontenay-Mareuil, vol. ii, p. 4.

of a marriage, which, while it must greatly enrich the Prince, and augment his influence, would nevertheless still render him amenable to their authority, was on his side eager to effect his alliance with a foreign princess, for the express purpose of emancipating him from a dependence which interfered with his own influence, and threatened his personal ambition. Meanwhile the Prince himself was divided between his affection for the beautiful heiress, and his desire to shake off the yoke of the Cardinal-minister, to which he submitted with ill-disguised impatience; and thus, although less ostensibly, each faction continued to intrigue as busily as ever.

CHAPTER V.

[1625—28.]

DEATH OF JAMES I.—THE PRINCESS HENRIETTE IS MARRIED BY PROXY TO CHARLES I. — THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM ARRIVES IN FRANCE TO CONDUCT HIS YOUNG SOVEREIGN TO HER NEW COUNTRY — AN ARROGANT SUITOR — DEPARTURE OF THE ENGLISH QUEEN — INDISPOSITION OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—ARRIVAL OF HENRIETTE IN LONDON — GROWING POWER OF RICHELIEU — SUSPICIONS OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER — INFLUENCE OF THE JESUIT BÉRULLE OVER MARIE DE MEDICIS—RICHELIEU URGES MONSIEUR TO CONCLUDE HIS MARRIAGE WITH MADEMOISELLE DE MONTPENSIER—CHARACTER OF GASTON—HE REFUSES TO ACCEPT THE HAND OF THE LADY—ARREST OF M. D'ORNANO —VENGEANCE OF RICHELIEU—INDIGNATION OF MONSIEUR—ALARM OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—PUSILLANIMITY OF GASTON — ARREST OF THE VENDÔME PRINCES—EDICTS ISSUED AGAINST THE GREAT NOBLES—SUMPTUARY LAWS—EXECUTION OF THE COUNT DE BOUTEVILLE—THE REIGN OF RICHELIEU — POLICY OF MARIE AND HER MINISTER — DISTRUST OF THE KING — CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE CARDINAL — RICHELIEU THREATENS TO RETIRE FROM OFFICE—A DIPLOMATIC DRAMA —TRIUMPH OF THE CARDINAL—EXECUTION OF CHALAIS—HEARTLESSNESS OF GASTON — MONSIEUR CONSENTS TO AN ALLIANCE WITH MADEMOISELLE DE MONTPENSIER—A ROYAL MARRIAGE—THE VICTIMS OF RICHELIEU—MARIE DE MEDICIS AND THE CARDINAL ENDEAVOUR TO INCREASE THE DISSENSION BETWEEN LOUIS XIII. AND HIS QUEEN — EXILE OF THE DUCHESS DE JOYEUSE — ACCUSATION AGAINST ANNE OF AUSTRIA — SHE BECOMES A STATE PRISONER — SUBTLETY OF RICHELIEU — ANTICIPATED RUPTURE WITH ENGLAND — EMBASSY OF BASSOMPIERRE—DEATH OF THE DUKE DE LESDIGUIÈRES—FAVOUR OF SAINT-SIMON — PREGNANCY OF THE DUCHESS OF ORLEANS—DISSOLUTE CONDUCT OF MONSIEUR — BIRTH OF MADEMOISELLE — DEATH OF MADAME—MARIE DE MEDICIS SEEKS TO EFFECT A MARRIAGE BETWEEN MONSIEUR AND A FLORENTINE PRINCESS — BUCKINGHAM LANDS IN FRANCE, BUT IS REPULSED—ILLNESS OF LOUIS XIII.—DISGUST OF THE

DUKE D'ORLEANS — LOUIS WEARIES OF THE CAMP — HE IS INCENSED AGAINST THE CARDINAL—THE KING RETURNS TO PARIS—MONSIEUR AFFECTS A PASSION FOR THE PRINCESS MARIE DE GONZAGA WHICH ALARMS THE SOVEREIGN—HIS DISTRUST OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—MARIE DE MEDICIS WITHDRAWS HER CONFIDENCE FROM THE CARDINAL —MOTHER AND SON—LOUIS RETURNS TO LA ROCHELLE—THE CITY CAPITULATES—TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF LOUIS XIII. INTO PARIS—EXHORTATION OF THE PAPAL NUNCIO.

CHAPTER V.

[1625—28.]

THE death of James I. and the succession of Charles, Prince of Wales, to the English throne, at the commencement of the year 1625, excited the greatest uneasiness at the court of France, where all parties were alike anxious for the arrival of the papal dispensation. Nor was the new monarch himself less desirous to complete the contemplated alliance; as only three days were suffered to elapse after the demise of his royal father ere he hastened to ratify the treaty, and to make preparations for its immediate fulfilment.*

On the arrival of the long-expected courier from Rome, the dispensation was delivered into the hands of Marie de Medicis, by Spada, the papal nuncio; and on the 8th of May, the Duke de Chevreuse, whom Charles had appointed as his proxy, signed the contract of

* Lingard, vol. ix, p. 326.

marriage, conjointly with the Earl of Carlisle and Lord Holland, who officiated as ambassadors extraordinary from the court of St. James'. At the ceremonial of the marriage, which took place on the 11th of May, the difference of religion between the English monarch and the French princess compelled the observance of certain conventional details which were all scrupulously fulfilled. The Cardinal de la Rochefoucault, Grand-Almoner of France, pronounced the nuptial benediction on a platform erected before the portal of Notre-Dame; after which the Duke de Chevreuse and the English ambassadors conducted the young Queen to the entrance of the choir, and retired until the conclusion of the mass, when they rejoined Louis XIII. and their new sovereign at the same spot, and accompanied them to the great hall of the archiepiscopal palace where a sumptuous banquet had been prepared.*

Some days subsequently George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham arrived unexpectedly in Paris, to urge the immediate departure of the Princess for her new kingdom, and to express the impatience of the King his master to welcome her to his dominions. The extraordinary magnificence displayed by Buckingham on this occasion was the comment of the whole court, while the extraordinary beauty of his person excited no less admiration than the splendour of his apparel; nor was it long ere the scandal-mongers of the royal

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 285, 286

circle whispered that it had not failed in its effect upon the fancy, if not upon the heart, of Anne of Austria, who received his homage with an evident delight which flattered the vanity of the brilliant visitor. High in favour with his sovereign, and anxious to profit by so favourable an opportunity of enhancing his own personal attractions, Buckingham appeared at the court festivals attired in the crown jewels; and indulged in a reckless profusion which enriched all with whom he came into contact, and soon rendered him a general favourite. Aware of the impression that he had produced, the English duke, whose ambition was as great as his gallantry, soon suffered himself to be betrayed into an undisguised admiration of the French queen which led him to commit a thousand unbecoming follies; while Anne was on her side so imprudent that her most partial biographer deemed it necessary to advance an apology for her levity by declaring that "it should excite no astonishment if he had the happiness to make this beautiful Queen acknowledge that if a virtuous woman had been able to love another better than her husband, he would have been the only person who could have pleased her."*

Fortunately alike for the thoughtless Anne and the audacious favourite this dangerous intercourse was abruptly terminated by the departure of Madame Henriette, who left the capital in great pomp, accompanied by the King her brother (who was to proceed

* Motteville, Mém., vol. i, p. 342. Note.

only as far as Compiègne), and by the two Queens, from whom she was not to separate until the moment of her embarkation at Boulogne, where the vessels of Charles awaited her arrival. On reaching Amiens, however, Marie de Medicis was attacked by sudden indisposition; and as, after a delay of several days, it was found impossible that she should continue her journey, the English queen was compelled to take leave of her august mother and sister-in-law in that city, and to proceed to the coast under the escort of Monsieur, who was attended by the Dukes of Luxembourg and Bellegarde, the Maréchal de Bassompierre, the Marquis d'Alencourt, and the Viscount de Brigueil. On the 22nd of June sail was set upon the royal fleet, and in twenty-four hours Queen Henriette reached Dover, where she was met by her impatient consort, who on the following day conducted her to Canterbury; and in the course of July, she made her entry into London, whence, however, she was immediately removed to Hampton Court, the prevalence of the plague in the capital rendering her sojourn there unsafe.

Having witnessed the departure of the royal bride for her new kingdom, Monsieur and his brilliant train returned to Amiens; and on the recovery of the Queen-mother, the whole of the august party retraced their steps to Paris, whence they shortly afterwards proceeded to Fontainebleau.*

* Mercure Français, 1625. Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. v, pp. 849, 850.

At this period Richelieu had become all-powerful. He possessed the entire confidence alike of the King and of the Queen-mother; he had been appointed chief of the council, and possessed such unlimited authority that he opened the despatches, and issued orders without even asking the sanction of Marie de Medicis, whose influence was rapidly becoming merely nominal; and whose favour he treated so lightly that he never appeared at court during the absence of the King lest the jealousy of Louis should be aroused, and he should be induced to believe that the wily minister still acknowledged the supremacy of his ancient benefactress;* while he flattered the ambition of the war-loving monarch by attributing to him personally all the success which attended his own measures alike in the foreign and civil contests which were at that period writing the history of the French nation in characters of blood.

Marie de Medicis was, however, slow to discover the off-falling of her long-cherished favourite. She still dwelt upon the years in which he had, as she fondly believed, devoted himself to her interests, when others in whom she had equally trusted had shrunk from all participation in her altered fortunes; and she was, moreover, conscious that to his counsels she was indebted for much of the prudence and ability which she had displayed on occasions of difficulty. It was, consequently, painful and almost impossible to suspect

* Brienne, Mém., vol. i, p. 422.

that now, when she was once more restored to the confidence of her son, and had resumed that position in the government which she had so long coveted in vain, he could sacrifice her to his own ambition. But Marie de Medicis, subtle politician as she esteemed herself, was utterly incapable of appreciating the character of Richelieu. She had now reached her fifty-third year; she was no longer necessary to the fortunes of the man whose greatness had been her own work; and she had ceased to interest him either as a woman or as a Queen. She had, moreover, become devout; and her increasing attachment for the Jesuit Bérulle (for whom she subsequently obtained a seat in the conclave) rendered her less observant of the neglect to which she was subjected by the minister; while her superstition, together with the prejudices and jealousies in which she indulged, occupied her mind, and blinded her to the efforts which the Cardinal was hourly making to reduce her to absolute insignificance.

Perhaps no greater proof of the unbounded influence which Richelieu had obtained over the mind of the King at this period can be adduced, than is afforded by the fact that although, as we have shown, Louis had stringently forbidden all further mention of his brother's marriage with Mademoiselle de Montpensier, and that Gaston had at length consented to relinquish his claim to her hand, the Cardinal found little difficulty in inducing the sovereign to rescind this order; and to instruct M. d'Ornano to determine the

weak and timid Prince to renew his addresses to the heiress; and to hasten the completion of the ceremonies.

Gaston d'Anjou had attained his seventeenth year; and although of more robust temperament than the King, he was constitutionally indolent and undecided. His after-history proves him to have been alike an incapable diplomatist, a timid leader, and a false and fickle friend; but as yet no suspicion of his courage or good-faith had been entertained by any party, and he was consequently the centre around which rallied every cabal in turn. He was, moreover, as we have already stated, the favourite son of the Queen-mother, who saw in him not only a cherished child but also a political ally. By securing the support of Gaston, Marie believed that she should be the more readily enabled to maintain her influence, and to protect herself against any future aggression on the part of Louis, with whom she felt her apparent reconciliation to be at once hollow and unstable; and as the vain and vacillating character of the Prince readily lent itself to the projects of each cabal in succession, so long as it did not interfere with his pleasures, every party in turn believed him to be devoted to its especial interests, and calculated upon his support whenever the struggle should commence. Thus, while himself jealous of Louis, whose crown he envied, Gaston d'Anjou was no less an object of distrust and terror to the King; who, whatever may have been his other

defects, was never found deficient in personal courage; and who could not consequently comprehend that with every inclination to play the conspirator, the young Prince was utterly incapable of guiding or even supporting any party powerful and honest enough openly to declare itself.

Under these circumstances, however, it is not surprising that the marriage of the heir-apparent should have excited the most absorbing interest not only at the French court, but throughout all Europe. The health of Louis XIII. continued feeble and uncertain; he rallied slowly and painfully after each successive attack; and since the visit of the Duke of Buckingham to Paris his repugnance to Anne of Austria had become more marked than ever; while the young Queen in her turn resented his neglect with augmented bitterness, and loudly complained of the injustice to which she should be subjected were the children of Gaston d'Anjou to inherit the throne of France. The princes of the blood supported Anne in this objection; for neither Condé nor the Count de Soissons could, as a natural consequence, regard with favour any measure which must tend to diminish the chances of their own succession; while the latter, moreover, desired to become himself the husband of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, and the Princess de Condé aspired to unite her own daughter, still a mere infant, to the brother of the King. The other great nobles were also disinclined to see the young Prince form so

close an alliance with the Duke de Guise; and the Duke of Savoy was eager to bestow on him the hand of Marie de Gonzaga, the heiress of Montferrat, and thus to secure to himself a powerful ally against the perpetual aggressions of his numerous enemies.

Ornano, as we have seen, had been commanded to renew the negociation of marriage between Gaston and the bride destined for him by Henry IV., but private reasons decided him against the measure; and, in consequence of his representations, the Prince formally refused to obey the expressed wishes of the King. The moment was a favourable one for Richelieu, who had long sought a pretext for ridding himself of Monsieur's favourite friend and counsellor; and he accordingly lost no time in impressing upon Louis that, as the young Prince was entirely governed by M. d'Ornano, no concession could be expected from him until that individual had been removed from about his person. Nor was the maréchal alone an object of suspicion and uneasiness to the minister, for it was not long ere he ascertained that the party of the Prince was hourly becoming more formidable, and that were the cabal not crushed in its infancy, it might ere long tend to endanger at once the safety of the sovereign and the tranquillity of the kingdom; while he also learned through his emissaries that his own security was no less involved in the issue than that of Louis himself.

Under these circumstances Richelieu at once felt

that the only method by which he could hope to control Gaston was by proceeding with the utmost severity against all such persons as should be convicted of endeavouring to excite the mind of the Prince against his royal brother; a policy which Louis eagerly adopted. In accordance with this resolution, during the sojourn of the court at Fontainebleau in the month of May, the King on his return from a hunting-party, after having retired to rest, suddenly rose again, dressed himself, and at ten o'clock at night summoned M. d'Ornano to his presence, whom he entertained for a time with a detail of the day's sport, and other inconsequent conversation, until du Hallier, the captain of the body-guard made his appearance at the head of his archers, and approaching the maréchal, announced to him that he was his prisoner; requesting him to withdraw from the royal apartment, whence he conducted him to the chamber in which the Duke de Biron had been confined twenty-four years previously,* while Madame d'Ornano at the same time received an order to quit Paris upon the instant, and the two brothers of the disgraced courtier, together with MM. Déageant, Modèna, and other partisans of the maréchal were also arrested.

By this bold stroke of policy the Cardinal effectually paralysed the power of Monsieur; although this conviction was far from appeasing his personal apprehensions.

* Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 14, 15. Capefigue, (Richelieu, Mazarin, &c.) vol. iv, p. 8.

Among the favourites of the Prince he had equally marked for destruction the young Prince de Chalais,* the Duke de Vendôme, and his brother the grand-prior; but Richelieu feared by venturing too much, to lose all, for his authority had not at that period reached its acme; and he felt all the danger which he must incur by adopting measures of such violence against two princes of the blood.

The indignation of Monsieur was, moreover, thoroughly excited, and he did not scruple either to reproach his royal brother, or to utter threats against those who had aided in the arrest of the maréchal, whose restoration to liberty he vehemently demanded; and as his representations failed to produce the desired effect, he indulged in a thousand extravagances which only tended to strengthen the hands, and to forward the views of Richelieu, who found no difficulty in widening the breach between Louis and the imprudent Prince by whom his authority was openly questioned. In vain did Marie de Medicis endeavour to impress upon him the danger of such ill-advised violence, Gaston persisted in upholding his favourite; until the King, irritated beyond endurance, exhibited such marked displeasure towards his brother that the weak and timid Prince began to entertain fears for his own

* Henri de Talleyrand, Prince de Chalais, was a cadet of the illustrious house of Talleyrand, whose personal advantages had secured to him the favour of Louis XIII., by whom he was appointed grand-master of the wardrobe.

safety, and became suddenly as abject as he had previously been haughty; abandoned Ornano to his fate; and after signing an act, in which he promised all honour and obedience to the sovereign, carried his condescension so far as to visit the Cardinal in his residence at Lemours, whither he had retired on the pretext of indisposition.

Richelieu triumphed: and ere long the Duke de Vendôme and his brother were arrested in their turn, and conveyed to the citadel of Amboise. The Count de Soissons, the second prince of the blood, fled the court in alarm, and took refuge in Savoy; while edict after edict was fulminated against the nobles, which threatened all their old and long-cherished privileges. The costume of each separate class was determined with a minuteness of detail which exasperated the magnificent courtiers, who had been accustomed to attire themselves in embroidery and cloth of gold, in rich laces, and plumed and jewelled hats, and who suddenly found themselves reduced to a sobriety of costume repugnant to their habits; the Count de Bouteville, of the haughty house of Montmorency, who had dared to disregard the revived law against duelling, lost his head upon the scaffold; and all castles, to whomsoever belonging, which could not aid in the protection of the frontiers, or of the towns near which they were situated, were ordered to be demolished.

The reign of Richelieu had commenced.

Meanwhile, the court had taken up its residence

at Fontainebleau; where Louis, deaf to the murmurs of his great nobles, passed his time in hunting, a sport of which he was passionately fond; while Marie de Medicis and the Cardinal endeavoured, by every species of dissipation, to lull him into acquiescence with the perilous measures they were adopting.

Always sickly and querulous, Louis was a prey to dark thoughts and fearful anticipations of early dissolution; and even while he suffered himself to be amused by the hawking, dancing, and feasting, so lavishly provided for his entertainment, he was never at fault, during his frequent fits of moroseness and ill-humour, for subjects of complaint. His brother, Gaston d'Anjou, whom he at once feared and hated, was a constant theme of distrust; while the Count de Soissons, the Duke de Montmorency, and the Prince de Chalais, his sworn adherents, were at times equally obnoxiou to the suspicious and gloomy young sovereign. Then he bewailed the treachery of the Queen, whom he believed, through the agency of Richelieu, to be engaged in an intrigue with Spain dangerous to his own interests; mourned over himself because he had weakly suffered his authority to be usurped by a subject, and had not moral courage to redeem the error; and in his most confidential moments even inveighed against Richelieu with the bitterness of a sullen school-boy, declaring that it was he who had poisoned the mind of his brother, estranged him from his wife, and deprived him of the support of the princes of the

blood; forgetting, or wilfully overlooking the fact, that a single effort on his own part must have sufficed for his emancipation from this rule of iron.

On the departure of the court for Fontainebleau, the Cardinal, according to his usual custom, had excused himself on the plea of ill-health from following the King; while Gaston d'Anjou, who, despite the concession that he had made, still deeply resented the affront to which he had been subjected by the arrest of his governor, had remained at Paris. Richelieu was, however, far from inactive in his retreat; but, while he was occupied in further schemes of self-aggrandisement, the partisans of the Prince were equally busy in devising the means of ridding themselves of a thrall so obnoxious to their pride; and after mooting several measures which were successively abandoned from their apparent impracticability, it was at length decided, that under the pretext of a hunting-party, nine of the conspirators should proceed to Fleury, and there assassinate their common enemy. Of this number was the unfortunate Chalais; who, however, before the execution of the project, confided it to a friend, by whom he was warned against any participation in so dangerous an attempt, and advised immediately to apprise the Cardinal of his danger. As the young Prince hesitated to follow this counsel, the Commandeur de Valence, who was anxious to save him from, as he believed, inevitable destruction, assured him that should he fail to communicate the conspiracy

to the minister, he would himself instantly reveal it; upon which Chalais, intimidated by the threat, consented to accompany him to Richelieu, and to confess the whole.

Having listened attentively to all the details of the plot, the Cardinal courteously thanked his informants, and requested them to proceed to Fontainebleau, and to repeat what they had told him to the King. He was obeyed; and an hour before midnight Louis dispatched a body of troops to Fleury, with orders to obey the orders of the minister whatever might be their nature; while Marie de Medicis at the same time commanded the officers of her household and a number of the nobility to accompany the royal guards.

As Chalais had asserted, at three o'clock on the following morning the clerks of the kitchen to the Duke d'Anjou arrived at Fleury, and immediately commenced their preparations for the dinner of the Prince; upon which Richelieu caused them to be informed that he should leave the house at the entire disposal of Monsieur; and, escorted by the armed party that had been sent for his protection, he set out at once for Fontainebleau, where he had no sooner arrived than he went without the delay of a moment to the apartment of the King's brother. Gaston was in the act of leaving his bed, and was evidently alarmed by the sudden appearance of so unexpected a visitor; but the Cardinal, affecting not to perceive his embarrassment, merely reproached him in the most courtly terms for the

precaution which he had taken, assuring him that he should have felt honoured had he relied upon his hospitality; but adding that, since his Highness had shown himself desirous to avoid all restraint, he was happy to be at least enabled to offer him the use of his residence. The Prince, taken by surprise, and utterly disconcerted at the failure of so well-organised a plot, could only stammer out his acknowledgments; and the Cardinal had no sooner heard them to an end than he requested admission to the King, where, having briefly expatiated upon his escape, he requested permission with ably-acted earnestness to retire from the court.

As we have shown, Louis was by no means slow in deprecating the self-constituted authority of Richelieu; but he was nevertheless so well aware of his own incapacity, that the idea of being thus abandoned by a minister whose grasp of intellect and subtle policy had complicated the affairs of government until he was compelled to admit his own utter powerlessness to disentangle the involved and intricate mesh, terrified him beyond expression; nor was Marie de Medicis, whom he hastened to summon on perceiving the apparently resolute position assumed by Richelieu, less alarmed than himself.

Had the scene been enacted by three individuals of mean station, it would have been merely a painful and a degrading one, for each was alike deceiving and deceived; but as they stood there, a crowned King,

a Princess born "under the purple," and a powerful minister, it presented another and a more extraordinary aspect. Stolid and resolute as were alike the mother and the son, they were totally unable to cope with the superior talent and astuteness of the man whom they had themselves raised to power; and before the termination of the interview, Richelieu had convinced both that his counsels and services were essential to their own safety.

This point conceded, the wily Cardinal was enabled to make his own terms. He received the most solemn assurances of support, not only against the brother of the sovereign, but also against the princes of the blood and all the great nobles; while a promise was moreover made, and ratified, that he should have immediate information of every attempt to injure him in the estimation of the King; and, finally, he was offered a body-guard, over which he was to possess the most absolute control.

This exhibition of royal weakness strengthened the hands of the haughty minister, who thus became rega in all save name and blood; and encouraged him to pursue his system of dissimulation. As mother and son vied with each other in opening before him the most brilliant perspective ever conceded to a subject, he feigned a reluctance and a humility which only tended to render their entreaties the more earnest and the more pressing; until at length, although with apparent unwillingness, he was prevailed upon to retain his post,

and to crush his enemies by the exhibition of a splendour and authority hitherto without parallel in the annals of ministerial life.*

It was not to be anticipated that under such circumstances as these the imprudent Chalais could retain one chance of escape. Aware of his favour with the King, his fall at once relieved Richelieu of a rival, and taught the weak and capricious monarch to quail before the power of the man whom he had thus invested with almost unlimited authority; and the natural result ensued. Unwilling to admit that he sought to revenge an attempt against his own person, the Cardinal caused the unfortunate young noble to be accused of a conspiracy against the life of the King himself, and a design to effect a marriage between Anne of Austria and the Duke d'Anjou. Judges were suborned; a court was assembled; the gay and gallant Chalais, whose whole existence had hitherto been one round of pleasure and splendour, and who was, as we have fully shown, too timid and too inexperienced to enact, even with the faintest shadow of success, the character of a conspirator, was put upon his trial for treason, and condemned to die upon the scaffold; nor did the efforts of his numerous friends avail to avert his fate.

Louis forgot his former affection for his brilliant favourite in his fear of the minister who sought his destruction; while the heartless and ungrateful Gaston,

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 317—319.

willingly overlooking the fact that it was in his service that the miserable young man had become compromised, actually appeared as one of his accusers; his relatives were forbidden to intercede in his behalf; and, finally, when some zealous friends succeeded in secreting not only the royal executioner but also the city functionary, in the hope of delaying his execution, the emissaries of the Cardinal secured the services of a condemned felon, who, on a promise of unconditional pardon, consented to perform the part of headsman; and who, between his inexperience and his horror at his unwonted task, performed his hideous functions so imperfectly that it was only on the thirty-fourth stroke that the head of the martyred young man was severed from his body.*

During the progress of this iniquitous trial, (which took place in the city of Nantes, whither Louis had proceeded to convoke the States of that province,) both Marie de Medicis and Richelieu were assiduously labouring to accomplish the marriage of Gaston with Mademoiselle de Montpensier; nor does there remain the slightest doubt that it was to the splendid promises held out by his mother and her minister on this occasion, that the cowardly and treacherous conduct of the Prince towards his unfortunate adherent must be ascribed. A brilliant appanage was allotted to him;

* Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 21, 22. Bassompierre, Mém., vol. iii, p. 56. Brienne, Mém., vol. i, p. 432. Gaston, Duc d'Orleans, Mém., vol. i, p. 56. Le Vassor, vol. v, pp. 471—500.

he was to assume the title of Duke d'Orleans; to occupy a post in the government; and to enjoy a revenue of a million of francs.

Prospects far less flattering than these would have sufficed to purchase Gaston, whose besetting sin throughout his whole life was the most disgusting and inordinate selfishness; but when his consent had been obtained, a new difficulty supervened on the part of the King, whose distrustful character would not permit him to perceive the eagerness with which the Cardinal urged forward the alliance without misgivings which were fostered by his immediate friends. Richelieu, however, soon succeeded by his representations in convincing the suspicious monarch of the policy of thus compelling his brother to a thorough subjection to his own authority, which could not have been enforced had Monsieur allied himself to a Princess of Austria or Spain; an argument which was instantly appreciated; and a royal command was accordingly dispatched to the elected bride to join the court at Nantes, under the escort of the Duke de Bellegarde, the Maréchal de Bassompierre, and the Marquis d'Effiat.

In accordance with this invitation, Mademoiselle de Montpensier arrived at Nantes on the 1st of August; and on the 5th of the same month, while the wretched and abandoned Chalais was exposed to the most frightful torture, the marriage took place. "There was little pomp or display," says Mezeray; "either at the betrothal or at the nuptial ceremony." *Feux de joie*

and salvos of artillery alone announced its completion. The mass was, however, performed by Richelieu himself; and so thoroughly had he succeeded in convincing Louis of the expediency of the measure, that the delight of the young King was infinitely more conspicuous than that of the bridegroom. The satisfaction of Marie de Medicis, although sufficiently evident, was calm and dignified; but the King embraced the bride on three several occasions; and no one could have imagined from his deportment that he had for a single instant opposed a marriage which now appeared to have fulfilled his most sanguine wishes.*

The reign of blood had nevertheless commenced. The head of Chalais fell on the 19th of August; and on the 2nd of September the Maréchal d'Ornano expired in his prison; a fate which was shared on the 28th of February, 1629, by the Grand-Prior of Vendôme, both of these deaths being attributed to poison. Be the fact as it may, thus much is at least certain, that the Cardinal, not daring to drag two legitimated princes of the blood to the scaffold, had gradually rendered their captivity more and more rigorous, as if to prove to the nation over which he had stretched his iron arm, that no rank, however elevated, and no name, however ancient, could protect its possessor.

Having accomplished the marriage of the Duke d'Orleans, Richelieu and the Queen-mother next

* Capefigue, vol. iv, p. 34.

laboured to widen the breach between Louis XIII. and his wife; for which purpose they represented that she had taken an active part in the detected conspiracy, and was secretly intriguing with Spain against the interests of her royal husband; an attempt in which she had been aided and abetted by her confidential friends.

The first consequence of this accusation was the arrest of Madame de Chevreuse, who, after having undergone a formal examination, was exiled from the court; and this order had no sooner been obeyed than Anne of Austria was summoned to the presence of the King, whom she found seated between the Queen-mother and the Cardinal, and there solemnly accused, on the pretended revelations of Chalais while under torture, of having intrigued to procure the death of her husband, and her own marriage with his brother.

To this accusation the Spanish princess disdainfully replied that "she should have gained so little by the exchange, that the absurdity of the charge must suffice for its refutation;" but her haughty and indignant retort produced no effect upon her judges. She was commanded thenceforward to reside exclusively at the palaces of the Louvre and St. Germain; without the privilege of receiving a single guest, not even excepting the ambassador of the King her brother, or the Spanish attendants who had accompanied her to France, and moreover forbidden all correspondence beyond the limits of the kingdom; while, at the same time, as if to complete her humiliation, she was strictly prohibited

from receiving any male visitor in her apartments during the absence of the King.*

Although, as we have stated, Richelieu was present at this degrading scene, he nevertheless professed to be perfectly independent of what he thought proper to designate as mere family dissensions, entirely beyond the functions of a minister; and thus the whole odium of the proceedings fell upon Louis XIII. and the Queen-mother, while the Cardinal himself remained ostensibly absorbed by public business. Neither the great nobles nor the people were, however, deceived by this assumed disinterestedness; but all felt alike convinced that the total alienation which supervened between the royal couple was simply a part of the system by which Richelieu sought one day exclusively to govern France.

Henrietta Maria had left Paris after her betrothal, accompanied by a numerous retinue of French attendants of both sexes, and by several of the priests of the Oratory, attired in their black gowns; and on her arrival at Whitehall she had been permitted to have the services of her religion performed in one of the apartments of that palace; but this concession did not, unhappily, serve to satisfy the exactions of the girl-Queen, who even during the first days of her residence in England, suffered herself to betray all her antipathy to the heretical nation which was hereafter to be her home. At the public ceremonial of her marriage, when

* Sismondi, vol. xxiii, p. 22. Capefigue, vol. iv, p. 35. Bassompierre, Mém., vol. iii, p. 57.

the venerable Abbey of Westminster was crowded with princes, bishops, and barons, she refused to receive her crown from the hands of a Protestant prelate, or to bend her knee before the Lord Primate; while at the same time, relying on her youth and the effect which her extreme beauty had produced upon her royal consort, she endeavoured to obtain an ascendancy over him that excited the jealousy and distrust of the English court; a feeling which was not lessened by the fact that she succeeded in extorting from the King his sanction to erect a chapel for the more solemn observance of the rites and ceremonies of her faith. Acting under the influence of Richelieu, who at frequent intervals dispatched missionaries to London upon futile errands, with instructions that she should retain them about her person, she soon moreover taught herself to believe that she had a great mission to accomplish; and under this impression she carried her imprudence so far as to authorise a public procession through the streets of London, in which she herself appeared mounted upon a mule, surrounded and followed by all her household, and a crowd of Roman Catholic ecclesiastics.

So wanton a disregard for the feelings of her new subjects excited the indignation of the Parliament, and made them distrustful of the Duke of Buckingham, through whose agency and influence the alliance with France had been formed; while it laid the foundation of those accusations against him which were so warmly refuted by the sovereign. The Parliament was dis-

solved, and the necessity of raising subsidies engaged the minister in measures which became hostile to the French interests. An anti-Catholic reaction was declaring itself; and Buckingham at once felt that he could not more effectually satisfy both the Parliament and the people than by suppressing without delay that spirit of religious defiance which was germinating in the very palace of the King.

With this conviction he accordingly declared to the young Queen, a few days after the public pilgrimage which she had made, that she must immediately send back to France, not only the members of her household, but also all the ecclesiastics who had induced her so ostentatiously to insult the faith of the kingdom by which she had been received and welcomed with a warmth that merited more consideration on her part. Indignant at so peremptory an order, Henrietta exhibited an amount of violence which in a mere girl failed to produce the effect that she had anticipated. The duke continued calm and resolute, while she, on her side, vehemently refused to comply with his directions; and after having reproached the sovereign in the most bitter terms for what she designated both as a breach of faith and as an act of tyranny, she summoned the Bishop of Mende, the French ambassador, to the palace, and instructed him to apprise the King her brother of the insult with which she was threatened.

The prelate approved her resistance: and loudly declared that neither the individuals composing her

household, nor the ecclesiastics who were attached to it, should leave England without an order to that effect from their own sovereign; and he forthwith dispatched couriers to Paris, to inform the court of the position of the English queen; to which Louis replied by insisting that the persons who had accompanied his royal sister to her new kingdom should be permitted to remain about her; in default of which concession he should thenceforward hold himself aggrieved, and become the irreconcilable enemy of the British government.

The Duke of Buckingham nevertheless persisted in his resolution, and the foreign attendants of Henrietta were compelled to return to France, to the excessive indignation of Marie de Medicis, who refused to see in the extreme munificence of Charles towards the exiled household, any extenuation of the affront which had been put upon her favourite daughter; while Henrietta, on her part, far from endeavouring to adapt herself to circumstances, and to submit with dignified submission to a privation which it was no longer in her power to avert, gave way to all the petulance of a spoiled girl, and overwhelmed the minister with reproaches and even threats. So unmeasured, indeed, were her invectives that at length, when she had on one occasion exhausted alike the temper and the endurance of Buckingham, he so far forgot the respect due to her rank and to her sex, as well as his own chivalry as a noble, as to retort with an impetuosity little inferior to her own that she had better not proceed too far, "for that in England

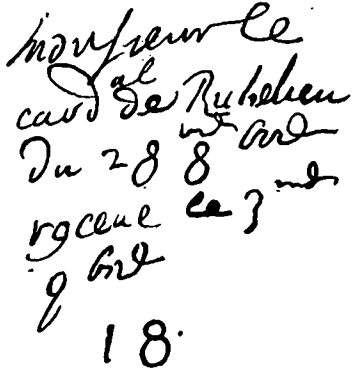
queens had sometimes lost their heads;" a display of insolence which Henrietta never forgot or forgave, and which was immediately communicated to the French court.

Time, far from lessening the animosity of the young Queen towards the favourite, or the consequent schism between herself and the King, appeared rather to increase both; and Richelieu, after having for a while contemplated a war with England conjointly with Philip of Spain, ultimately abandoned the idea as dangerous and doubtful to the interests of France. M. de Blainville and the Marquis d'Effiat were dispatched to the court of London with orders to attempt a compromise; but both signally failed; and Louis had no sooner returned to Paris than the Cardinal, who was aware that Buckingham was as anxious to commence hostilities as he was himself desirous to maintain peace, induced the King to dispatch Bassompierre as ambassador-extraordinary to the court of Whitehall, with stringent instructions to effect, if possible, a good understanding between the two countries.

On his arrival in England, however, Bassompierre discovered to his great consternation that the coldness existing between the English monarch and his Queen was even more serious than had been apprehended at his own court; and he was met on the very threshold of his task by a declaration from the Duke of Buckingham, that Charles would only consent to give him a public audience on condition that he should not touch upon the subject which had brought him to England; as he felt that it was one which must necessarily make him lose

his temper, which would be undignified in the presence of his court and with the Queen at his side; who, angered by the dismissal of her French retinue, would not, as he felt convinced, fail in her turn to be guilty of some extravagance, but would probably shed tears before everybody; and that consequently, without this pledge on the part of the French envoy, he would accord him merely a private interview. Bassompierre hesitated for a time before he could bring himself to consent to such a compromise of his own dignity and that of his royal master; but, aware of the importance attached by Richelieu to the result of his mission, he at length declared that after having delivered the letters with which he was intrusted, he would leave it to his Majesty to determine the length of the audience, which might be easily abridged by a declaration that the subjects upon which they had to treat would require more time than his Majesty could then command, and that he would consequently appoint an earlier hour to see him in private.

This delicate affair having been thus satisfactorily arranged, the public audience took place at Hampton Court. Bassompierre was introduced into the royal presence by the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Carlisle, and on entering he found the King and Queen seated upon a raised daïs, surrounded by a brilliant court, but both sovereigns rose as he bent before them. Having presented his letters, together with the royal message, Charles, as had been previously arranged, pleaded want of leisure to enter upon public business; upon which the envoy proceeded to pay his respects to



N°3. Fac simile of an Autograph Letter of the Cardinal de Richelieu to M. de Bassompierre, during his Embassy in England

Monsieur Il faut accouer que vous agissez auec tant de prudence au lieu ou vous estes, qu'il est impossible de pouuoir n'en adiouster à vostre proceder. Si celuy des personnes auec qui vous auez a traitter, estoit tel quon le peut desirer, vous rapporterez sans doute autant de satisfaction a sa Maiesté, et en vous mesme comme vos lettres semblent donner lieu de croire le contraire. Ce vous doit estre neantmoins en cela vne grande consolation, qu'y ayant contribué tout ce qui est vous, vous n'estes pas responsable des euenemens qui deppendent d'autruy. Mr D'herbault vous fait scauoir si particulierement les intentions du Roy sur ce sujet, que i'estimeray superflu d'adiouster aucune chose a ces lignes si ce n'est la priere que ie v[illegible] fais de me tenir pour estre veritablement comme e suis

Monsieur

Vostre tresaffectionné seruiteur

Le Card De Richelieu

de Boutoiseau xxbre oct. 1626

London, Colleen RC 1[illegible]

the Queen, who briefly replied that his Majesty having given her his permission to return to the capital, she should be able when there to discourse with him at greater length. Bassompierre then withdrew, and was escorted by all the great nobles to his carriage.

This commencement, as it will be at once apparent, was sufficiently unpromising, but the French envoy was in a position of such responsibility that he dared not suffer himself to be discouraged; nor had he been long in England ere he became painfully convinced that the petulance and want of self-government in which Henrietta wilfully indulged, daily tended to widen a schism that was already too threatening. Nevertheless, Bassompierre remained firmly at his post. Matrimonial feuds in high places were no novelty to the brilliant courtier of Henry IV., and the confidant of Marie de Medicis; and he at once felt that he must enact at St. James' the same personage as Sully had formerly represented at Fontainebleau and the Louvre; nor did his experience of the past fail, moreover, to convince him of the policy of endeavouring in the first instance to effect a reconciliation between the Queen and the favourite. This was, however, no easy task; but at length the zealous marquis succeeded in the attempt, as he informs us in his usual *naïve* style.

"On Sunday the 25th," he says; "I went to fetch the duke and took him with me to the Queen, where he made his peace with her, which I had accomplished after a thousand difficulties. The King afterwards

came in, who also made it up with her and caressed her a great deal, thanking me for having restored a good understanding between the duke and his wife; and then he took me to his chamber, where he showed me his jewels which are very fine."

On the morrow, however, when Bassompierre went to pay his respects to Henrietta at Somerset House, he discovered that he had personally lost considerably in her favour, as she vehemently complained that he sacrificed her dignity as a Princess of France to expediency; and had espoused the cause of her adversary instead of upholding her own. To these reproaches the royal envoy replied by explaining the difficulty of his position, and the earnest desire of his sovereign to maintain peace; but this reasoning did not avail to satisfy the wounded vanity of the girl-Queen; who finally, by her violence, compelled Bassompierre to remind her that her headstrong egotism was endangering the interests of her royal brother. Incensed at this accusation, Henrietta at once wept and recriminated; and finally the French courtier retired from her presence, and hastened to forward a courier to Paris to solicit the interference of the King and his minister, and to request further instructions for his guidance.

A few days subsequently, after he had received urgent letters from the King, by which he was commanded to avoid in every emergency a rupture between the two countries, Bassompierre again waited upon the Queen, and explained to her the stringent orders of her royal

N°4. Fac simile of a Letter to the Marshal de Bassompierre signed by Louis XIII. and Countersigned by Somenie, Minister of State

Mon cousin Ayant estimé que le bien de mes affaires
et service requeroit qu'aucunes propositions les concernans
feussent de si bien par gens de diverses condicions les plus
qualifiés de mon estat, j'ay pensé veu l'estime en laquelle
vous estes et le rang que vous tenez, ne pouvoir faire
meilleur choix que de vous qui en cette occasion ne me
manquerez de vre fidelité et affection accoustumée,
Jusques a l'ouverture de cette assemblée au Lundy xxiiii^e
du gaut mois en mon chaud de St Germain en Laye ou il
desire que vous vous rendiez pour cet effect affin d'assister
a la ouverture et entendre ce qui y sera proposé de ma
part ce que mesmement que vous effectuerez de ma
dite qu'il vous ait mon cousin en sa sainte garde escrit
a St Germain en Laye le xve jour de Novembre 1626.

Louis

De Ameniu

brother; but Henrietta persisted in declaring that her actual position was not appreciated at the French court; and while she was maintaining this argument, despite all the asseverations of the bewildered envoy, the arrival of the King was announced, who had no sooner entered the apartment than a violent quarrel arose, which threatened such serious consequences that Bassompierre interposed, assuring the imprudent Princess that should she not control her temper, and acknowledge her error, he would on the following day take leave of his Britannic Majesty, and on his return to Paris explain to the sovereign and the Queen-mother that he had been compelled to abandon his mission entirely through her obstinate and uncompromising violence.

As this threat produced an evident effect upon Henrietta, the King had no sooner retired than the maréchal, with admirable tact and temper, represented to the young Queen that at the age of sixteen she was incompetent to appreciate the measures of her royal consort; while by her intemperate language and strong prejudices she was seriously injuring her own cause. Henrietta, during her paroxysms of petulance, was deaf to all his remonstrances; but on this occasion she listened with greater patience, and even admitted that she had gone too far; a concession which once more restored the hopes of Bassompierre.

Meanwhile he continued to receive constant letters of encouragement, both from Louis XIII. and Richelieu, urging him to persevere until he should have succeeded

in effecting a perfect reconciliation not only between the King and Queen, but also between the Queen and the Duke of Buckingham; and assuring him of their perfect satisfaction with the measures which he had already adopted. Marie de Medicis was, however, less placable; and much as she deprecated the idea of hostilities with England, she nevertheless openly applauded the resistance of her daughter to what she designated as the tyrannical presumption of Buckingham, and the blind weakness of Charles, who sacrificed the domestic happiness of a young and lovely bride to the arrogant intrigues of an overbearing favourite. The English duke himself was peculiarly obnoxious to the Queen-mother, who could not forgive his insolent admiration of Anne of Austria, and the ostentatious manner in which he had made the wife of her son a subject of court scandal; while, at the same time, she deeply resented the fact that Henrietta had not even been permitted to retain her confessor, but was compelled to accept one chosen for her by the minister.

While, therefore, Bassompierre constantly received directions from both the King and the Cardinal to ensure peace at any price, and to prevail upon the young Queen to make the concessions necessary to produce this result, Marie de Medicis as continually wrote to entreat of the maréchal to uphold the interests of the French princess, and to assure her of her perfect satisfaction at the spirit which she had evinced; though it is doubtful that when these messages were intrusted to

the royal envoy they were ever communicated to the excitable Henrietta.

Finally, to his great satisfaction, Bassompierre succeeded in carrying out the wishes of his sovereign; and he at length took his leave of the English court, laden with rich presents, after having received the warm acknowledgments of all parties for the patience and impartiality with which he had acted throughout; and the gratification of feeling that a better, and as he hoped a lasting, understanding existed between the royal pair. The household of Henrietta had been re-organised, and although upon a more reduced scale than that by which she had been accompanied from France, it was still sufficiently numerous to satisfy even the exigences of royalty; and thus, estimated by its consequences, this embassy was probably the most brilliant event of Bassompierre's whole career; as from the period of his residence at the court of England, the young Queen possessed both the heart and the confidence of her royal husband, whose affection for his beautiful and accomplished consort thenceforward endured to the last day of his existence.*

In the month of November France lost another of her marshals in the person of M. de Lesdiguières, who had passed his eightieth year; while the subsequently celebrated court-*roué*, the Duke de Saint-Simon, became the accredited favourite of the changeful and capricious

* Capefigue, vol. i, pp. 324—327. Bassompierre, Mém., vol. iii, pp. 60—76.

Louis, without, however, attaining any influence in the government, which had at this period become entirely concentrated in Richelieu and the Queen-mother.

The pregnancy of the Duchess d'Orleans, which was formally announced at the close of this year, was a source of great exultation to her husband, who received with undisguised delight the congratulations which were poured out upon him from every side; nor did he seek to disguise his conviction that, should the Queen continue childless, there was nothing to which he might see fit to aspire, which, with the assistance of the Guises and their faction, he would find it impossible to attain. A general hatred of Richelieu was the ruling sentiment of the great nobles, who were anxious to effect his overthrow, but the Cardinal was too prudent to be taken at a disadvantage; and he at once felt that in addition to the blow which he had aimed at the power of the barons by depriving them of their fortified places, he still possessed the means of maintaining his position, and even of increasing his authority by labouring to accomplish the destruction of the Protestants; a policy which was greedily adopted by Louis, whose morbid superstition coupled with his love of war for its own sake, led him to believe that the work of slaughter which must necessarily supervene, could not but prove agreeable to Heaven; counselled as it was, moreover, by a dignitary of the church.

While Richelieu was thus seeking to involve the nation in a renewal of that intestine warfare by which

it had already been so fearfully visited, simply to further his own ambitious views, the princes and nobles whom he had irritated into a thirst for vengeance, were no less eager to attain the same object in order to effect his ruin; and for this purpose they endeavoured to secure the co-operation of Gaston, deluding themselves with the belief that the heir-apparent to the throne, who had encouraged their disaffection, and for the maintenance of whose interests Ornano and Chalais had already suffered, would not refuse to them at so extreme a moment the support of his name, his wealth, and his influence. But these sanguine malcontents had not yet learned to appreciate the egotistical and ungrateful nature of the young Prince, who kept no mental record of services conferred, and retained no feeling of compunction for sufferings endured in his cause; but who ever sought to avail himself of both, while he continued utterly unable to appreciate either.

The appeal was consequently made in vain. Enriched by the careful policy of the Cardinal, Gaston sought only to profit by his suddenly-attained wealth; and despite the entreaties of his wife, whose youth, beauty, and accomplishments might well, for a time at least, have commanded his respect, he plunged into the most puerile and degrading pleasures, and abandoned himself to a life of alternate indolence and debauch. The immense fortune of the duchess, which had moreover been greatly increased by the accumulated interest of a long minority, was wasted in the most wretched

orgies, amid dissolute and unseemly associates; and even while he was awaiting with undisguised anxiety the birth of a son whom he fondly trusted would one day fill the throne of France, no sentiment of forbearance towards its mother could induce him to sacrifice his own selfish passions.*

On the 29th of May the desired event took place, but to the extreme mortification of the Duke d'Orleans it was announced that the duchess had given birth to a daughter; the Princess who subsequently became famous during the reign of Louis XIV., under the title of La Grande Mademoiselle. Nor was this the greatest trial which Gaston was destined to endure, as four days subsequently the unfortunate duchess breathed her last, to the regret of the whole court, to whom she had become endeared by her gentleness and urbanity; and to the deep grief of the Queen-mother, who saw in this deplorable event the overthrow of her most cherished prospects. Louis XIII. was, however, far from participating in the general feeling of sorrow, nor did he seek to conceal his exultation.

"You weep, Madam;" he said coldly to Marie de Medicis, whom he found absorbed in grief; "leave tears to your son, who will soon be enabled to drown them in dissipation. You will do well also not to expose him for some time to come to the chance of a second disappointment of the same nature; he is scarcely

* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 334.

fitted for a married life, and has signally failed in his first attempt at domestic happiness."

The Queen-mother offered no reply to this injunction; but while the King and Richelieu were absorbed by the invasion of Buckingham, and the persecution of the Protestants, she commenced a negociation with the Grand-Duke of Florence which had for its object an alliance between the widowed Gaston and one of the daughters of that Prince.

Buckingham had been repulsed by the French troops before the Island of Rhé, but had ultimately effected a landing; and on the 28th of June the King left Paris in order to join the army at La Rochelle, and to prevent a junction between the English general and the reformed party. He had already been threatened by symptoms of fever, but his anxiety to oppose the enemy was so great that he disregarded the representations and entreaties of those about him, and proceeded to Beaulieu, where he slept. Shortly after his arrival in that town his malady increased, but he still refused to follow the advice of his physicians, and on the morrow advanced as far as Villeroy, where, however, he was compelled to remain, being utterly incapable of further exertion.

This intelligence no sooner reached the Queen-mother than she hastened to rejoin the royal invalid; an example which was followed a few days subsequently by Anne of Austria, the keeper of the seals, and the whole court. The indisposition of the King, which for some

days threatened the most fatal results, was however ultimately conquered by his physicians; and on the 15th of August the august patient was declared convalescent.*

During the illness of the sovereign the entire control of public affairs had, by his command, been formally confided to Marie de Medicis and the Cardinal; and he was no sooner in a state to resume his journey than he hastened to La Rochelle which was blockaded by his forces under the orders of Monsieur; while the troops destined to succour the Island of Rhé were placed under the command of the Maréchal de Schomberg, and Louis de Marillac,† the brother of Michel de Marillac, the keeper of the seals (who, through the influence of Richelieu, had succeeded M. d'Aligre in that dignity), by whom Buckingham was compelled, after a siege of three months, to evacuate the island, and to retreat in confusion, and

* Mercure Français, 1627.

† Louis de Marillac was gentleman in ordinary of the bedchamber to Henry IV., and greatly distinguished himself by his valour alike under that sovereign and his successor Louis XIII. He was created Marshal of France in 1629; and was arrested in the camp of Felizzo in Piedmont in 1632, for having, as was asserted, volunteered to assassinate Richelieu with his own hand, when he voted against him in the assembly known as the "Day of Dupes." On the 8th of May in the same year he was condemned to lose his head; a sentence which was carried into execution in the Place de Grève; but his memory was subsequently re-established by a decree of the Parliament after the death of the Cardinal.

not without severe loss, to the vessels which awaited him.

This victory created immense exultation in France; the Duke de Saint-Simon was instructed to convey the colours and cannon taken from the English with great pomp to the capital, and public rejoicings testified the delight with which the citizens of Paris received the welcome trophies. One individual alone took no share in the general triumph, and that one was the Duke d'Orleans, who had been deprived of his command by the King, in order that it might be conferred upon the Cardinal de Richelieu; and who had so deeply resented the indignity that he instantly retired from the army, and returned to Paris, leaving Louis and his minister to continue the siege.*

The vigorous defence of the Rochelois, however, and the extreme severity of the winter, did not fail to produce their effect upon the King, who became weary of a campaign which exacted more mental energy than physical courage, and who was anxious to return to the capital. He declared his constitution to be undermined, and asserted that he should die if he remained in the camp; but as he feared that his reputation might suffer should he appear to abandon the army at his own instigation, he was desirous that Richelieu should suggest his departure, and thus afford him an opportunity of seeming resistance; while the

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 338, 339.

minister, who was unsuspicious of the truth, did not hesitate to assure him that his absence at so important a juncture might prove fatal to his interests, and could not fail to tarnish his fame as a general. Incensed by this opposition to his secret wishes, Louis retorted so bitterly that the Cardinal at once perceived his error, and hastened to repair it; nor did he do this an hour too soon, as the exasperation of the King was so great that he even talked of dispensing with his services; but the able policy of Richelieu once more saved him, and he so skilfully convinced the King only a few hours subsequently that his presence was necessary in the capital in order to counteract the intrigues of the Queen-mother and the Duke d'Orleans that the ruffled pride of the weak monarch was soothed, while a plausible pretext for his departure was supplied of which he hastened to avail himself; and having taken leave of the troops, he at length set forth for Paris on the 10th of February.

Louis was rendered moreover the more earnest to regain the capital by the constant information which he received of the gaieties in which the two Queens and Monsieur were constantly indulging while he was devoured by melancholy under the walls of the beleaguered city; nor had he been indifferent to a rumour which had reached him of the marked inclination evinced by the Prince his brother for the beautiful and accomplished Marie de Gonzaga, the daughter of

the Duke de Nevers, who shortly afterwards became Duke of Mantua.*

Coupled with his disinclination to see Gaston again placed in a position to give an heir to the French throne, Louis had sufficiently profited by the lessons of Richelieu to feel the whole extent of the danger by which he would be threatened should Gaston succeed in acquiring allies beyond the frontiers; and he accordingly hastened to express to the Queen-mother his displeasure at the intelligence of this new passion, with a coldness which immediately tended to convince her that a great change had taken place in his feelings towards herself. Alarmed by this conviction, and anxious to discover the cause of so marked an off-falling in his confidence, Marie de Medicis exerted all her energies to ascertain through whose agency her influence had thus been undermined; nor was it long ere she became assured that Richelieu had availed himself of her absence to renew all the old misgivings of the King; and by rendering her motives and affection questionable, to make himself entirely master of the mind of the jealous and suspicious monarch.

Once satisfied of this fact, the Queen-mother resolved to profit in her turn by the absence of the Cardinal, whose ingratitude was so flagrant as thenceforward to sever every link between them; and the

* Charles, Duke de Nevers, succeeded Vincent II., Duke of Mantua, who dying without issue on the 24th of December, 1628, solemnly appointed him his heir.

opportunity afforded by the open demonstrations of affection which Gaston lavished upon the Mantuan princess was consequently eagerly seized upon, in order to counteract the evil offices of the minister. Marie had watched the growing passion of the Duke d'Orleans with an annoyance as great as that of the King himself, for she had never forgotten the animosity displayed towards her by the Duke de Nevers; and she was, moreover, anxious, as we have already stated, to effect an alliance between her second son and a Princess of Tuscany; but aware of the capricious and unstable character of Gaston, she had hitherto confined herself to expostulations, which had produced little effect. Now, however, she resolved to derive the desired benefit from a circumstance which she had previously deprecated; and, summoning Monsieur, she readily persuaded him to affect the most violent indignation at her opposition, while she, on her side, would evince an equal degree of displeasure against himself. To this arrangement Gaston readily consented, as he delighted in intrigue, and was aware that by pursuing Marie de Gonzaga with his addresses he should alarm Richelieu as well as annoy the King. An open rupture accordingly appeared to take place between the mother and son; and while the duke continued to visit the young Princess, and to enact the impassioned lover, Marie de Medicis expressed her indignation in the most unmeasured terms, and threatened him with her unmitigable anger should

he persist in his suit. So well indeed did she perform her self-imposed part, that not only Louis himself, but the whole of the court were thoroughly deceived by the stratagem, and meanwhile the unsuspicious Princess became the victim of the dissembling Queen and her capricious and heartless suitor.*

As the Cardinal had laboured to impress upon the King that Marie de Medicis was anxious to effect the second marriage of her younger son in order to secure the succession to his children, Louis had arrived in the capital fully possessed by this idea; and his surprise was consequently great when he perceived that the Queen-mother resented the projected alliance as an insult to her own dignity; nor did he hesitate to express his satisfaction at the misunderstanding which it had caused between them. His moody brow relaxed; his suspicions were for awhile laid at rest; and after having devoted some time to the pleasures of the chase, he once more left the capital, and returned to La Rochelle.

On the 16th of October the city, exhausted by famine, and decimated by the artillery of the royal army, was compelled to capitulate; and on the 30th of the same month it was garrisoned by its conquerors. So soon as a fitting residence could be prepared for him, Richelieu took up his abode within its walls;

* Le Vassor, vol. v, p. 736. Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 339. Gaston d'Orleans, Mém., Petitot, vol. xxxi, p. 86. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 60, 61.

and on the 1st of November the King made a triumphal entry into the late stronghold of Protestantism in France, whose subjugation had cost the lives of upwards of forty thousand of his subjects.*

La Rochelle was no sooner in possession of the royal forces than the Cardinal determined to protect Mantua against the aggression of Austria, a measure which he proposed in the council, where it met with considerable opposition. Richelieu, however, persisted in his purpose, alleging that he had pledged himself to the Italian states to come to their support immediately that the campaign against the reformed party should have been successfully concluded; and he even urged the King to head the army in person. Louis, who was naturally brave, and who moreover prided himself upon his prowess in the field, and loved to contrast it with the pusillanimity of Philip IV. of Spain whose person was scarcely known to his troops, listened eagerly to the suggestion; but it was peculiarly obnoxious to Marie de Medicis, who did not fail to declare that the sole object of the Cardinal was to separate her from the King, and thus to weaken her influence. She consequently opposed the project with all the energy of her naturally impetuous character, asserting that her tenderness as a mother would not permit her to consent thus constantly to see her son exposed to the vicissitudes of war; or his feeble health

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 355—357.

overtaxed by exertions and fatigues to which he was unequal.

The Cardinal listened to her representations with an impassibility as respectful as it was impracticable. He had no faith in the reasons which she advanced, although he verbally accepted them, for the time had not yet arrived when he could openly brave her power; but it was at this period that the moral struggle commenced between them of which the unfortunate Queen was destined to become the victim.*

The exultation of Louis XIII. at the fall of La Rochelle was considerably lessened by a violent attack of gout which immediately succeeded, and by which he was detained a prisoner within its gates until the 19th of November; when he departed for Limours, where he was met by the two Queens and Monsieur. Thence the court proceeded to St. Germain, in order to enjoy the diversion of hunting; and subsequently to Versailles, to await the completion of the ceremonial of the solemn and triumphal entry of the King into his capital, which took place on the 23rd of December with great pomp and magnificence. All the approaches to the city were crowded by dense masses of the population of the adjacent country, while the streets were thronged by the citizens, who rent the air with acclamations. Triumphal arches were erected at distances along the road by which the royal pro-

* Sismondi, vol. xxiii, p. 94.

cession was to travel; the balconies of the houses were draped with silks and tapestry; and nearly eight thousand men, splendidly armed and clothed, awaited the King a league beyond the gates, in order to escort him to his capital. The Parliament, and all the municipal bodies harangued him as he reached the walls, and exhausted themselves in the most fulsome and servile flatteries; and finally he received the congratulations of all the foreign ambassadors, as well as that of the papal nuncio, by whom he was exhorted in the name of the Pope, to persist in the great work which he had so gloriously commenced, until he had accomplished the entire extermination of the Protestants of France.*

* Le Vassor, vol. v, pp. 907, 908.

CHAPTER VI.

[1629.]

RICHELIEU RESOLVES TO UNDERMINE THE POWER OF AUSTRIA—STATE OF EUROPE—OPPOSITION OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER TO A NEW WAR—PERSEVERANCE OF THE CARDINAL — ANNE OF AUSTRIA JOINS THE FACTION OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—GASTON IS APPOINTED GENERAL OF THE ROYAL ARMY—RICHELIEU RETIRES FROM THE COURT—ALARM OF LOUIS XIII.—A KING AND HIS MINISTER—LOUIS LEAVES PARIS FOR THE SEAT OF WAR—MONSIEUR IS DEPRIVED OF HIS COMMAND, AND RETIRES TO DAUPHINY—MARIE DE GONZAGA IS SENT TO THE FORTRESS OF VINCENNES—MONSIEUR CONSENTS TO FOREGO HIS MARRIAGE UNTIL IT SHALL RECEIVE THE ROYAL SANCTION, AND THE PRINCESS RETURNS TO THE LOUVRE—MARIE IS INVESTED WITH A PARTIAL REGENCY—FOREBODINGS OF THE CARDINAL—TERMINATION OF THE CAMPAIGN—RENEWED DISCORD—RICHELIEU BECOMES JEALOUS OF BASSOMPIERRE—LOUIS ABANDONS HIS ARMY, AND IS FOLLOWED BY THE MINISTER—COUNTERPLOTS — AN OFFENDED MISTRESS AND AN EX-FAVOURITE—A HOLLOW PEACE—GASTON RETIRES TO THE COURT OF LORRAINE, WHERE HE BECOMES ENAMOURED OF THE PRINCESS MARGUERITE—THE CARDINAL INVITES HIM TO RETURN TO PARIS—MONSIEUR ACCEPTS THE PROPOSED CONDITIONS — THE FRENCH TROOPS MARCH UPON PIEDMONT—RICHELIEU IS APPOINTED LIEUTENANT-GENERAL OF THE ROYAL FORCES IN ITALY—THE KING RESOLVES TO FOLLOW HIM—ANXIETY OF MARIE DE MEDICIS TO AVOID A RUPTURE WITH SPAIN—DISSENSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO QUEENS—MADEMOISELLE DE HAUTEFORT—FAILING INFLUENCE OF MARIE DE MEDICIS — SELF-DISTRUST OF THE KING — THE QUEEN-MOTHER ENDEAVOURS TO EFFECT A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN HER SONS.

CHAPTER VI.

[1629.]

La Rochelle had no sooner surrendered than, as already stated, Richelieu determined to make an attempt to undermine the power of Austria, greatly to the dissatisfaction of the Cardinal de Bérulle, Marillac the keeper of the seals, and all the other members of the secret council of Marie de Medicis. The position of Philip was at that moment a formidable one; Germany, which was almost entirely subjugated, was prepared to supply him with an immense amount of troops, while the treasures which had poured in upon him from the New World, made him equally independent as regarded the outlay required to support his armies. Moreover, religious prejudices strengthened their antagonism to the meditated war. The Emperor was anxious to exterminate the Protestants; and they consequently looked upon all opposition to that potentate as a crime against their own faith. M. de Bérulle was eloquent

and enthusiastic; Marillac aspired to build up his fortunes on the ruins of those of Richelieu, and to succeed him in his office as prime minister; and Marie de Medicis clung with tenacious anxiety both to the Emperor of Germany and the King of Spain, who had alike justified her determination to effect the overthrow of the man whom she had herself raised to power, and by whom she had been so ungratefully betrayed.

Marie and her counsellors were, however, by no means a match for the astute and far-reaching Richelieu; who had, by encouraging the belligerent tastes of the King, and still more by so complicating the affairs of the kingdom as to render them beyond the comprehension and grasp of the weak monarch, and to reduce him to utter helplessness, succeeded in making himself altogether independent of his benefactress, none of whose counsellors were capable of competing for an hour with his superior energy and talent. Aware of his advantage, Richelieu consequently despised the opposition by which he was harassed and impeded in his projects; and while he affected to pay the greatest deference to the representations of the Queen-mother, he persisted in his projects with an imperturbability which ensured their success.

One circumstance, however, tended greatly to embarrass the Cardinal-minister. Anne of Austria, indignant at the protracted neglect of the King, and the utter insignificance to which she was consequently condemned,

openly espoused the party of the Queen-mother; and, in her turn, loudly complained that the King should be induced by the egotism of the Cardinal to expose his health to the chances of warfare and the dangers of unwholesome climates; declaring that Richelieu, not satisfied with retaining his royal master for several months amid the marshes of Aunis, was now seeking to destroy him by contact with the snows and storms of the Alps during the depth of winter.

Irritated by these open accusations, and still more alarmed lest the egotism of the monarch should lead him to adopt the same opinion, the Cardinal urged the necessity of placing at the head of so considerable an army as that which was about to march into Italy, a general whose name alone must suffice to awe the enemy against whom it was directed; but even this subterfuge, welcome as it was to the vanity of Louis, did not produce the effect which he had hoped; for the Queen-mother, profiting by a private interview with the King, earnestly represented that a more favourable opportunity than the present could never again present itself, to effect a separation between Monsieur and Marie de Gonzaga.

"You know, Sire;" she said in conclusion; "how tenaciously I have striven to prevent a marriage so obnoxious alike to your Majesty and to myself, and how signally I have hitherto failed. Now, however, Gaston may be induced to forego his intention, for he has assured me that should you consent to confer

upon him the command of the expedition to Italy, he will resign all claim to the hand of Marie de Gonzaga, and even permit her to return to Mantua. It remains, therefore, with yourself to terminate an affair which has already created much annoyance both to your Majesty and to the Queen, who is equally desirous that this ill-judged and premature alliance should not be suffered to take place."

The tears and entreaties of the two Queens at length produced their effect; and with some reluctance Louis consented that his brother should be appointed to the command of the army, desiring, at the same time, that he should receive fifty thousand crowns to defray the expenses of his equipment; and, although the dissipated Prince lost the whole sum at the gaming-table during the course of a single evening, Richelieu did not venture upon further expostulation; the union of the two Queens, and the undisguised satisfaction of the great nobles, rendering a more sustained opposition alike doubtful and dangerous. Affecting, therefore, to withdraw from the struggle, he retired to Chaillot; while he left to his friends the task of reawakening the jealousy which Louis had long evinced of the military talents of his brother.* This project could not, as Richelieu was well aware, fail to prove successful; and, accordingly, the King ere long manifested great uneasiness and irritation; refused to join

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. vi, pp. 511—558.

in the amusements which Marie de Medicis was careful to provide for him; lost his rest; and, finally, set forth for Chaillot in order to have an interview with the minister.

When the Cardinal saw the moody King arrive, he at once felt that he had triumphed; the brow of Louis was as black as night, and he clutched the hilt of his sword with so tight a grasp that his fingers became bloodless.

"You are ill, Sire; you are suffering;" said the wily churchman, with well-acted anxiety; "can my poor services avail to restore you to peace of mind?"

"I cannot allow my brother," was the abrupt reply; "to command my army beyond the Alps. You must enable me to retract my promise."

"I know only one method of doing so;" said Richelieu, after appearing to reflect; "and that is that your Majesty should repair thither in person; but should you adopt this resolution, you must carry it into effect within eight days; there is no time to be lost."

"Be it so;" exclaimed Louis; "I will leave the capital, and place myself at the head of my troops;" and beckoning to Bassompierre, by whom he had been accompanied, and who stood near the door of the apartment, he added, with something approaching to a smile: "Here is a man who will willingly bear me company, and who will serve me zealously."

"Whither does your Majesty purpose to proceed?"

inquired the maréchal, as he bowed his acknowledgments.

"To Italy;" said the King; "and that not later than a week hence, in order to raise the siege of Casal. Make your preparations, and follow me without delay. I shall appoint you my lieutenant-general under my brother, should he consent to share in the campaign; and I shall also take the Maréchal de Créquy with me; he knows the country; and I trust that we shall cause ourselves to be talked of throughout Europe."*

Thus, in a single hour were all the projects of Marie de Medicis overthrown; and the King had no sooner, on his return to Paris, informed her of his change of purpose than she felt that Richelieu had at length thrown down the gauntlet, and that thenceforward there must be war between them; nor was the Duke d'Orleans less mortified and alarmed than the Queen-mother; but neither the one nor the other ventured to expostulate; and although with less precipitation than the King, Monsieur commenced his preparations. Louis XIII. left Paris on the 4th of January; but it was not until the 29th, that his brother took leave of the court, and reluctantly proceeded to rejoin him. The Cardinal had already set forth, although the extreme severity of the weather, and the deep fall of snow by which the roads were obstructed, might have sufficed to furnish him

* Bassompierre, Mém., vol. iii, p. 186.

with a pretext for delay; but it was no part of Richelieu's policy to suffer the two brothers to remain together beyond his surveillance; and accordingly, as was his usual habit on such emergencies, he threw off his indisposition, and boldly defied alike season and fatigue.

He might, however, as the event proved, have been more deliberate in his movements; for Monsieur, already disgusted by the disappointment to which he had been subjected, evinced no disposition to profit by the brief opportunity thus afforded to him, but proceeded leisurely to Dauphiny; where he had no sooner arrived than he received information that the most strenuous efforts had been made immediately that he had left Paris to hasten the departure of Marie de Gonzaga. Delighted at any pretext for abandoning the journey to which he had been compelled, he forthwith retraced his steps; but great as was the haste which he displayed to reach the capital, the first news by which he was greeted was that the Queen-mother had caused the Princess of Mantua to be imprisoned in the fortress of Vincennes.

This extraordinary intelligence was communicated to him by the Maréchal de Marillac, who had succeeded Richelieu in the confidence of Marie de Medicis; and who endeavoured to palliate the outrage by explaining the motives which induced her Majesty to take so singular a step. She had been, as M. de Marillac asserted, assured that his Highness had resolved to carry

off Mademoiselle de Gonzaga, and then to leave the kingdom; a determination by which she was so much alarmed that she had adopted the only measure which had appeared to her to offer a certain preventive to so dangerous and unprecedented a proceeding; but Monsieur would listen to no arguments upon the subject, and withdrew in violent displeasure to Orleans, whence he dispatched one of the officers of his household to protest against the imprisonment of the Princess, and to demand not only that she should immediately be set at liberty, but also that she should not be permitted to leave the country.

The Queen-mother, who was aware that she could not justify a proceeding which violated all the rights of hospitality, and who was, moreover, alarmed lest she should incur the lasting animosity of her favourite son, and thus render herself still more helpless than she had already become through the defection of Richelieu, found herself compelled to accede to a request which had in fact assumed the character of a command; but she, nevertheless, only accorded her consent to the release of the captive on condition that Monsieur should desist for a time at least in pressing his marriage either with Marie de Gonzaga or any other princess until he had received the consent of the King to that effect; and Gaston, having, after some hesitation, agreed to the proposed terms, the unfortunate girl was removed from Vincennes to the Louvre, whither the Prince immediately hastened

to congratulate her on her emancipation; and to express to the Queen-mother his indignation at what had occurred.*

Before the departure of the King for Italy, he had, at the instigation of Richelieu, declared Marie de Medicis Regent of all the provinces on the west bank of the Loire; a concession to which, extraordinary as it must appear, the Cardinal had been compelled, in order to appease the Queen-mother, whose exasperation at this renewed separation from the King had exceeded any which she had previously exhibited; and who had been supported in her complaints and expostulations by Anne of Austria, with whom she had began to make common cause. That Richelieu, however, did so with great and anxious reluctance there can be little doubt, as he was well aware that he had excited her suspicion and dislike, and that he should, moreover, leave her surrounded by individuals who would not fail to embitter her animosity against him.

Moreover, the haughty minister could not disguise from himself that he was labouring to build up his own fortunes upon the ruin of those of his benefactress—of the confiding and generous mistress to whom he was indebted for all the honours which he then enjoyed—nor could he fail to feel that such reprisals would be at once legitimate and justifiable; and accordingly he caused the commission of her regency to be prefaced by the

* Gaston d'Orleans, Mém., pp. 86, 87. Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 367.

most elaborate encomiums. Not content with asserting that her "able government and her wise measures had proved her to be alike the mother of the sovereign and of the state," Louis, acting under the advice of the wily minister, lavished upon her every epithet of honour and respect; apparently forgetting that he had previously exiled her from the court, taken up arms against her, and that he even then believed her to be in secret correspondence with his enemies; while at the same period Richelieu records in his Memoirs that the Pope had declared to his nuncio, during his audience of leave-taking on his departure for the French court: "You will see the Queen-mother. She is favourable to Spain; and her attachment to the King her son does not extend beyond her own interests. She is, moreover, one of the most obstinate persons in the world."*

And yet, even while dwelling with complacency on the papal strictures, the Cardinal did not hesitate to put into the mouth of the King the most unmeasured panegyrics of the same Princess, in order to shelter himself from her vengeance. This concession was the result of an able calculation, for Richelieu could not remain blind to his personal unpopularity; and was moreover conscious that both Marie de Medicis and Monsieur were beloved by the populace. It was not perhaps that either the one or the other was individually the object of popular affection, but each represented the interests of an irritated opposition; and both sought to undermine

* Le Vassor, vol. vi, pp. 21—23.

the existing government, or rather, the authority of Richelieu, who was rapidly absorbing all power, and striving to bend the necks of nobles, citizens, and people under his iron yoke.*

The campaign having terminated favourably for the royal cause; and the taking of La Rochelle, coupled with the deliverance of Casal, having greatly increased the influence of Richelieu over the mind of the King, the former began more openly to defy the power of the Queen-mother; and, anxious, if possible, to regain the favour of Gaston, he no longer scrupled to declare that she had been actuated solely by her own interests in the violent repugnance which she had evinced to the union of the Prince with Marie de Gonzaga; and to impress upon the weak monarch the danger of irritating his brother by further opposition to an union which would meet with the approval of the whole kingdom. Louis however, as we have already shown, was himself averse to the marriage of Monsieur, who had refused to see him until he consented to his wishes; but, angered by this apparent defiance, he nevertheless bitterly reproached his mother for her harshness towards both parties, and refused to listen to her proffered justification.

Marie de Medicis at once perceived whence the factitious strength of her son was derived; and all her previous affection for the Cardinal became changed into a hatred which was destined to continue undiminished to the close of her existence.

* Capefigue, vol. iv, pp. 278, 279.

Nor was Richelieu on his side less ill at ease. He was aware that his ingratitude to his benefactress was the theme of general remark and reproach; and he apprehended, should the King fall a victim to one of those attacks of indisposition to which he was continually subject—an event which had been foretold by the astrologers, and which was anticipated by his physicians—that he should be unable to contend against the animosity of the irritated Princess, and the undisguised aversion of the Duke d'Orleans, who made no effort to conceal his dislike to the haughty minister, against whom he published during his sojourn at Nancy, a manifesto, in which he accused him of having usurped the authority of the sovereign.

Louis, however, who felt his own utter inability to dispense with so able and fearless a counsellor, disregarded the discontent of the Prince; and increased his indignation by issuing letters patent, in which, after eulogising the Cardinal, and expressing his sense of the services which he had rendered alike to himself and to his kingdom, he officially appointed him prime minister. It is true that from his first admission to the council Richelieu had performed all the functions consequent upon that rank, but he had nevertheless hitherto been preceded by the other ministers, whereas this public declaration enabled him to take his place immediately below the princes of the blood;* while, in addition to

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 368, 369.

this new dignity, he found himself *de facto* generalissimo of the King's armies in Piedmont.

Bassompierre had meanwhile greatly distinguished himself at the pass of Suza, which had been forced by the French troops; and his vigour, activity, and courage had rendered him the idol of the soldiers, who justly attributed to his able exertions no small portion of the success which had attended the royal arms. The military renown of the brilliant courtier, whom he had hitherto affected to regard merely as a spoilt child of fortune, was, however, highly distasteful to the Cardinal, whose flatterers did not fail to persuade him that the victory was due to his own admirable arrangements, rather than to the valour of any of the generals who had braved the dangers of the hazardous expedition; and he consequently sought to excite the jealousy and suspicion of Louis against the zealous maréchal, who little imagined that his prowess in the field was fated to involve his personal safety.

The sojourn of Suza, a wretched locality in which, while awaiting the ratification of the treaties consequent upon its capture, Louis could not even enjoy the diversion of hunting, soon exhausted the patience of the monarch, who declared his intention of returning to France previous to the conclusion of the necessary arrangements; and although he was earnestly entreated by Soranzo, the Venetian ambassador, to forego his purpose, he resolutely refused to listen to his representations; and on the 28th of April he accordingly

commenced his homeward journey; simply taking the precaution, in order to satisfy his several allies, of leaving Richelieu with a strong body of troops, and full authority to terminate as he should see fit, the pending negociations. The Cardinal, however, felt as little inclination as his royal master to waste his time, and to exhaust his energies at such a distance from the court; and thus to enable his enemies to gain the unoccupied ear of the King, who was, as he had already experienced, easily swayed by those about him. During his absence from the capital his emissaries had been careful to report to him every movement of the Queen-mother and the Duke d'Orleans; and he felt that he was lost should they again succeed in acquiring the confidence of the weak and wavering Louis. Within a fortnight after the departure of the monarch, he consequently made his own hasty preparations for a similar retreat; and having placed six thousand infantry and five hundred horse under the command of the Maréchal de Créquy, with orders that he should vigilantly guard the several passes, and rigidly enforce the orders of the King, he set forth in his turn for Paris, in order to contravert the designs of the rival faction.

Meanwhile Marie de Medicis and Gaston d'Orleans had been consistent in their policy; and on the arrival of Louis in Paris he was assured that time had only tended to embitter their misunderstanding on the subject of the Princess de Gonzaga; a fact, which was no sooner ascertained by Richelieu, than he resolved to

profit by so promising an opportunity of regaining the good graces of the royal duke. This was precisely the result which both the mother and son had desired; for while the former sought to secure a pretext of complaint against the ingratitude and treachery of the individual whose fortunes had been her own work, and who now evinced a disposition to build up his prosperity upon the disobedience of her best-beloved child, the latter had many and forcible reasons for being equally delighted to see the ordinarily-astute Cardinal taken in his own toils; and readily consented to second the irritated Queen-mother in her attempt to effect his overthrow. During the first few days which succeeded the arrival of the King in Paris, every circumstance tended to increase the hopes of Marie de Medicis. Louis made no secret of his satisfaction at the firmness which she had evinced, and displayed towards her a confidence and respect by which she was assured that his prejudices were shaken;* but the sudden apparition of the Cardinal reawakened all her anxiety.

His advent was no sooner announced than a swarm of velvet-clad and jewelled nobles hastened to Nemours to bid him welcome; and thence they served as his escort to Fontainebleau, where the court was then sojourning, and whither he travelled in a covered litter, followed by the Marshals of Bassompierre, Schomberg, and Marillac. On reaching the palace Richelieu at once proceeded to the apartments of the Queen-mother,

* Le Vassor, vol. vi, pp. 111—114.

accompanied by the Cardinals of La Valette and Bérulle, and the other nobles who had joined him on the road; where he found himself in the presence not only of Marie de Medicis, but also in that of the young Queen, the princesses, and all the great ladies of the court, by the whole of whom he was very coldly received; and the blood mounted to his brow as Marie de Medicis replied to his lowly salutation by a slight curtsey, and a formal inquiry after his health.

"I am well, Madam;" he answered petulantly; "better than many of those whom I see in your company may have desired."

The Tuscan princess turned haughtily away; but as her eyes fell upon the Cardinal de Bérulle her confessor, her features relaxed into a smile, which was not unobserved by the irritated minister.

"Ah, Madam;" he said, striving to rally alike his temper and his hopes, and addressing his royal mistress with the familiarity of old times; "would that I were possessed of the same amount of favour as M. de Bérulle."

"Oh, Monseigneur;" replied the Queen drily; "I was laughing at the extraordinary breeches of the reverend cardinal."

This retort turned the gaze of the whole circle upon her confessor, who, on taking the road, had discarded his flowing purple robes, and attired himself in a short vest, a pair of *haut-de-chausses*, and white boots; and the smile immediately became general.*

* Capefigue, vol. iv, pp. 280—282.

Richelieu bit his lips with an impatient gesture; and then, in order to divert the attention of the courtiers from the discomfited Jesuit, he hastened to present to their Majesties the three marshals who were in his suite. Marie de Medicis bowed to each in succession, but addressed herself only to M. de Marillac; and the scene was becoming each instant more embarrassing when the usher on duty threw back the tapestried hangings of the door, and announced "The King."

The face of Louis beamed with delight as he extended his hand to the minister, and welcomed him once more to the capital; but the brow of Richelieu remained clouded until he was led away by the monarch, with whom he continued in conversation for a considerable time, complaining bitterly of the reception which he had met with from the Queen-mother, and requesting permission to retire from office, and to leave the court. To this proposition Louis, however, refused to accede, declaring that whatever might be the cause of the Queen's displeasure, he would soon find some means of effecting their reconciliation.

As, however, after the lapse of several days, Marie de Medicis evinced no disposition to display greater cordiality towards her late favourite, Richelieu deemed it expedient to adopt more stringent measures; and he accordingly sent for his niece Madame de Comballet, who was lady of honour to the young Queen, M. de la Meilleraye his kinsman, who was also a member of her household, and several other persons who were devoted

to his interests, and who held places about the court, and desired them to tender their resignation, as he was about to withdraw from office. Intelligence of this order soon reached the ears of the King, by whom it was violently opposed; and at his earnest entreaty the Queen-mother was at length induced to pardon the Cardinal, who with the utmost humility professed his utter unconsciouness of all offence, and his deep regret at the displeasure exhibited by her Majesty. But neither Richelieu nor Marie was the dupe of this hollow peace, although both were willing for the moment to pacify the monarch, who was also anxious for the return of his brother; Gaston having, on the first intimation of the expected arrival of Louis in the capital, withdrawn to Lorraine,* and placed himself under the protection of the ducal sovereign, who received his royal guest with the greatest magnificence.

Worthless as he was individually, Gaston was destined throughout his whole career to serve as a rallying-point for the ambition of all the princes and nobles who sought to aggrandise themselves and their families; while, as presumptive heir to the French throne he was welcomed by the Duke of Lorraine with every demonstration of respect and regard. Aware of the puerile vanity of the princely fugitive, the duke stood bareheaded in his presence, and never presumed to seat himself until he had received an invitation to do so. Moreover, he had

* Bassompierre, Mém., vol. iii, pp. 235, 236.

been instructed by the Spanish cabinet to exert all his best energies to win over the Prince to his interests;* a suggestion upon which he acted so skilfully that the little court of Lorraine became a perpetual scene of festivity and amusement, of which the futile and fickle Gaston was at once the object and the centre. Nor was there wanting in the ducal circle an attraction even greater than the splendid *fêtes* and brilliant assemblies at which Monsieur fluttered and feasted in all the triumph of his weak and selfish nature. The Princess Marguerite, the younger sister of M. de Lorraine, soon weaned the changeful fancy of Gaston from the persecuted Marie de Gonzaga; nor had he long resided at Nancy before his marked attentions to the beautiful and accomplished Princess became the subject of general remark and comment.†

This state of things seriously alarmed the Cardinal; who, in addition to his hatred of the Guises, apprehended the worst consequences should the Prince be permitted thus to emancipate himself from the royal authority, and to play the *quasi*-sovereign with impunity; and, accordingly, only a few weeks after the establishment of Gaston in Lorraine, he dispatched the Cardinal de Bérulle and the Duke de Bellegarde to Nancy to negociate his return. Aware of his advantage, however, the

* Capefigue, vol. iv, pp. 287, 288.

† Gaston d'Orleans, Mém., pp. 88, 89. Mesdames de Lorraine were related to Charles I., through Mary Queen of Scots, his grandmother, who was the daughter of a princess of that house.

Prince testified no inclination to yield to the solicitations of the minister; and demanded in the event of his compliance a provincial government in appanage. Rendered more and more anxious by this pertinacity, Richelieu, even while refusing to concede the required boon, heaped offer upon offer without effect, until the Maréchal de Marillac, more successful than the two previous envoys, induced Gaston to accept as a substitute for the government which he demanded the fortresses of Orleans and Amboise, with a hundred thousand annual livres, and fifty thousand crowns in ready money. An agreement to this effect was drawn up; after which Monsieur pledged himself to return to court, and to submit in all things to the pleasure of the King and the Queen-mother; an idle promise, where his hostility to the minister constantly urged him to opposition; but which served to tranquillise the mind of Louis, who being about once more to renew the war in Italy, was desirous to secure peace within his own capital.

Immediately after the departure of the Cardinal from Suza, the armies of Austria and Spain had advanced to the centre of Italy, and the power of France beyond the Alps was consequently threatened with annihilation. In this extremity Richelieu instantly directed the concentration of all the frontier forces upon Piedmont, and declared war against the Duke of Savoy; but as the whole responsibility of this campaign would necessarily devolve upon himself, he demanded of the King that an unlimited authority should be granted to him, in the

event of his Majesty declining to head the army in person. With this demand Louis unhesitatingly complied; and on the 29th of December the Cardinal left Paris as lieutenant-general of the royal forces, escorted by ten companies of the King's body-guard, and surrounded by upwards of a hundred nobles.*

Previously to his departure, however, he entertained the King, the two Queens, and the principal nobility, at one of those elaborate *fêtes* which have now become merely traditional; and which combined a comedy, a concert, and a ballet, with other incidental amusements, sufficient, as it would appear in these days, to have afforded occupation for a week even to the most dissipated pleasure-seekers; but which during the reign of Louis XIII. excited emulation rather than surprise.

Richelieu had scarcely commenced his march, when the King resolved in his turn to proceed to Italy with a force of forty thousand men; a determination which was no sooner made known to the Queen-mother than she expressed her intention of bearing him company in this new expedition; as, superadded to her anxiety to counterbalance by her presence the influence of the Cardinal, she was moreover desirous to prevent a rupture with Spain, and to protect the Duke of Savoy, whom she secretly favoured.†

The never-ceasing intrigues of the court had once

* Capefigue, vol. iv, pp. 288—298. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 370, 371.

† Le Vassor, vol. vi, pp. 252, 253.

more sowed dissension between the two Queens; and it is here necessary to state that on the death of the Countess de Lanoy, which had occurred towards the close of the preceding year, her charge of lady of honour to Anne of Austria had been conferred upon the Marquise of Seneçay,* while that previously held by Madame de Seneçay was bestowed upon Madame du Fargis. As these arrangements had been made without any reference to the wishes of the Queen herself, she expressed great indignation at an interference with the internal economy of her household which was generally attributed to Marie de Medicis; but her anger reached its climax when she ascertained that the Countess du Fargis was the fast friend of Madame de Comballet,† the niece of Richelieu. Apprehensive of the consequences likely to accrue to herself from such an intimacy, Anne of Austria for some time refused to admit the new mistress of the robes into her private circle, alleging that her apartments were not sufficiently spacious to accommodate the relatives and spies of a minister who had already succeeded in embittering her existence. All opposition on her part was, however, disregarded; the ladies were officially installed; and although the Queen made no secret of

† Marie Catherine de la Rochefoucault, the widow of Henri de Beaufremont, Marquis de Seneçay. She died in 1677, at the age of eighty-nine years.

* Marie Madeleine de Vignerot, Dame de Comballet, afterwards Duchess d'Aiguillon.

her annoyance, and loudly inveighed against both Richelieu and her royal mother-in-law for the indignity to which she was thus subjected, they retained their places, and endeavoured, by every demonstration of respect and devotion, to gain the good graces of their irritated mistress. In this endeavour one of them only was destined to succeed, and that one, contrary to all expectation, was the beautiful and witty Countess du Fargis, whose fascinations soon won the heart of the young Queen, and who was fortunate enough to secure alike her confidence and her esteem; nor was it long ere she profited by her advantage to attempt a reconciliation between Marie de Medicis and her offended daughter-in-law; urged thereto, as some historians assert, by the advice of the Cardinal de Bérulle, but more probably by her own affection for the Queen-mother, in whose household she had formerly held the same office which she now filled in that of Anne of Austria.

Her project, however, presented considerable difficulty. The King had suddenly become more assiduous than he had ever yet shown himself in his attendance upon the court of Marie de Medicis, constantly joining her evening circle, and absenting himself entirely from the apartments of his royal consort; a circumstance which Anne did not fail to attribute to the evil offices of the Tuscan princess, who, as she asserted, was perpetually labouring to undermine her dignity, and to usurp her position. Soon, however, it became rumoured

that it was to no effort on her own part that the Queen-mother was indebted for the constant society of the monarch, but rather to the attractions of one of her maids of honour; and that for the first time in his life Louis XIII. evinced symptoms of a passion to which he had hitherto been supposed invulnerable. Mademoiselle de Hautefort, the object of this apparent preference, was remarkable rather for intellect than beauty; her conversational powers were considerable, her mind well cultivated, and her judgment sound. She was, moreover, totally without ambition, virtuous from principle, and an enemy to all intrigue.

On first being made acquainted with the presumed infidelity of her royal consort, Anne of Austria exhibited the most unmeasured anger, and was unsparing in her menaces of vengeance; but it was not long ere Madame du Fargis succeeded in convincing her that she had nothing to fear from such a rival, and that she would act prudently in affecting not to perceive the momentary fancy of the King for the modest and unassuming maid of honour.

"You have only to consult your mirror, Madam;" she said in an accent of conviction which at once produced its effect upon the wounded vanity of the Queen; "to feel that you are beyond an apprehension of this nature. Believe me when I assert, that were his Majesty capable of such a passion as that which is now attributed to him, he could not remain insensible to your own attractions. Mademoiselle de Hautefort is

amiable, and amuses the indolence of the King; but did he seek more than mere amusement, it is in yourself alone that he could find the qualities calculated to awaken the feeling which you deprecate."

Anne of Austria listened with complacency to a species of consolation which she could not but acknowledge to be based on probability, as she was conscious that even in the midst of the most brilliant court in Europe her own beauty was remarkable; and although she still indulged in a sentiment of irritation against the Queen-mother, through whose agency the King had formed so dangerous an intimacy,* she nevertheless consented to conceal her discontent, and to maintain at least a semblance of cordiality with her illustrious relative; a policy which the approaching departure of the monarch rendered imperative.

The influence of Marie de Medicis over the mind of the King had, as we have shown, seriously diminished after the return of Richelieu to the capital; while the necessity of pursuing the campaign in Italy had rendered the services of his able minister more than ever essential to Louis, who was aware of his personal inefficiency to overcome the perils by which he was menaced on all sides; and who had so long ceased to sway the sceptre of his own kingdom, that he was compelled to acknowledge to himself that the master-spirit which had evoked the tempest was alone

* Brienne, Mém., vol. ii, pp. 2—4.

able to avert its effects. This conviction sufficed to render him deaf to all remonstrances, and at length induced him sullenly to command their discontinuance. He declared that every one about him felt a delight in calumniating the Cardinal, and on all occasions he ostentatiously displayed towards the triumphant minister the utmost confidence and affection.

As the Queen-mother became convinced that all her efforts to undermine the interests of Richelieu must for the present prove abortive, she ceased to expostulate, and turned her whole attention towards the reconciliation of the royal brothers. Aware that the Dukes of Lorraine and Savoy were seeking by every means in their power to increase the discontent of Gaston,* and that Charles Emmanuel had offered him a safe retreat in Turin, and an army to support him should he desire to overthrow the power of the Cardinal by whom he had been reduced to the position of a mere subject without authority or influence,† she wrote in earnest terms to caution him against such insidious advice; and urged upon the King the expediency of recalling him to Paris, and investing him with the command both of the city itself and of the surrounding provinces during his own absence from the kingdom.

In reply to the entreaties of his mother, Gaston declared his willingness to become reconciled to the

* Mercure Français, 1629.

† Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. vi, pp. 789, 790.

King, and to serve him to the best of his ability; but he at the same time requested that she would not exact from him any similar condescension as regarded Richelieu, whom he looked upon as his most dangerous enemy, and on whom he was resolved one day to revenge himself. Against this determination Marie de Medicis felt no disposition to offer any expostulations, as it accorded with her own; and she consequently merely represented to the Prince the necessity of concealing his sentiments from the King (whom she had induced to comply with her request), and to make immediate preparations for his return to France.*

* Le Vassor, vol. vi, pp. 254, 255.

CHAPTER VII.

[1630.]

GASTON RETURNS TO FRANCE — PRECARIOUS POSITION OF THE FRENCH ARMIES—DEATH OF THE DUKE OF SAVOY — THE FRENCH BESIEGE PIGNEROL—RICHELIEU URGES THE KING TO POSSESS HIMSELF OF THE DUCHY OF SAVOY — MARIE DE MEDICIS OPPOSES THE MEASURE — LOUIS XIII. OVERRUNS SAVOY—THE FRENCH LOSE MANTUA—JULES MAZARIN — THE KING IS ATTACKED BY FEVER AT LYONS — MORAL EFFECTS OF HIS INDISPOSITION—HE CONSENTS TO DISMISS THE CARDINAL FROM OFFICE—RECONCILIATION OF THE ROYAL FAMILY—THE COURT RETURN TO THE CAPITAL—RICHELIEU ENDEAVOURS TO REGAIN THE FAVOUR OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—POLICY OF MARIE—RICHELIEU SEEKS TO EFFECT THE DISGRACE OF MARILLAC—THE TWO QUEENS UNITE THEIR INTERESTS — MEETING OF THE ROYAL BROTHERS—GASTON INVEIGHS BITTERLY AGAINST THE CARDINAL—THE QUEEN-MOTHER TAKES UP HER ABODE AT THE LUXEMBOURG—LOUIS PROCEEDS IN STATE TO BID HER WELCOME—MONSIEUR PUBLICLY AFFRONTS RICHELIEU—A TREATY IS CONCLUDED WITH ITALY — PUBLIC REJOICINGS IN PARIS — MARIE DISMISSES THE CARDINAL AND HIS RELATIONS FROM HER HOUSEHOLD —A DRAMA AT COURT—RICHELIEU PREPARES TO LEAVE PARIS; BUT IS DISSUADED, AND FOLLOWS THE KING TO VERSAILLES—EXULTATION OF THE CITIZENS AT THE ANTICIPATED OVERTHROW OF THE CARDINAL-MINISTER—THE COURTIERS CROWD THE LUXEMBOURG—BASSOMPIERRE AT FAULT — TRIUMPH OF RICHELIEU — HYPOCRISY OF THE CARDINAL — "THE DAY OF DUPES" — A REGAL MINISTER — THE MARILLACS ARE DISGRACED — ANNE OF AUSTRIA IS SUSPECTED OF A SECRET CORRESPONDENCE WITH SPAIN — GASTON CONSPIRES WITH THE TWO QUEENS AGAINST RICHELIEU—DIVIDED STATE OF THE FRENCH COURT— A FÊTE AT THE LOUVRE.

CHAPTER VII.

[1630.]

At the close of January, 1630, the Duke d'Orleans, in compliance with his promise, took leave of the court of Lorraine; and early in February he passed the French frontier, and had an interview with the King, who had already reached Troyes, accompanied by the two Queens and their several households. At this meeting the royal brothers displayed towards each other an amount of confidence which gladdened the heart of the Queen-mother, to whom their long estrangement had been a subject of perpetual grief and anxiety; nor was their good-understanding lessened for an instant until their separation upon the departure of Louis for Lyons, when Monsieur in his turn proceeded to Orleans, where he remained until the middle of March; and thence he finally returned to Paris towards the close of April to assume his command.*

* Gaston d'Orleans, Mém., pp. 89, 90.

As the Cardinal had foreseen, there was little time to be lost in retrieving the fortunes of the French armies. Casal in Montferrat, which was held by M. de Thoiras,* was besieged by the Marquis of Spinola† with an immense force, and he earnestly demanded the sum of fifty thousand crowns to defray the arrears due to his troops, who had began to murmur, and threatened to surrender. The Germans had once more attacked Mantua, which they ultimately took; and the army of MM. de la Force and Schomberg were suffering from sickness, famine,

* Jean de Saint-Bonnet, Seigneur de Thoiras. He was created Marshal of France in 1630, and was killed in Italy in 1636.

† Ambroise, Marquis de Spinola, one of the most famous generals of the seventeenth century, was the representative of an illustrious house which was subsequently divided into several branches, some of whom established themselves in Italy, and others in Spain. The subject of our note placed himself at the head of nine thousand Italians, and commenced his military career in the Low Countries, where he distinguished himself by his extraordinary courage. The siege of Ostend having lasted so long as to weary the patience of the Archduke of Austria, he transferred the command of his troops to Spinola, by whom the place was carried in 1604. He was then appointed general of the Spanish armies in the Low Countries, and maintained his ground, although opposed to Maurice of Nassau, the most able general of his time. He rendered several other important services to the Emperor in the Palatinate, and took Breda in 1625. In 1630 he made himself master of the city and fortress of Casal; and shortly afterwards died from mortification at the ill requital of his services.

and desertions, and moreover harassed by the troops of the Duke of Savoy. Charles Emmanuel meanwhile was advancing in person upon Savillan, in order to provoke an engagement with the French forces; and on every side difficulty and danger loomed over the banners of Louis, when the Duke of Savoy was suddenly attacked by apoplexy and expired towards the close of January. He was succeeded by Victor Amedée his elder son, who was the husband of Madame Christine of France, the sister of the French king; and it was anticipated that the closeness of this alliance would at once terminate all aggressive measures on the part of France, and that the new Duke would be suffered to take peaceful possession of his inheritance. Such, however, was not the policy of the Cardinal, and accordingly the operations already directed against the duchy were suffered to proceed.

Shortly after the arrival of the King at Lyons he received a despatch from the minister stating that he had taken Pignerol, and thus secured a safe passage for his Majesty into Italy; and that he was about to join him at Lyons, in order to receive his further commands.

On his arrival he was warmly welcomed by Louis, whom he easily induced to accompany him on his return to the seat of war; for although in his despatches Richelieu had affected to attach an immense importance to the conquest of Pignerol, he was aware that the honour of the French nation must be compromised

should her armies be thus checked at the very commencement of the expedition, and he consequently urged the King at once to possess himself of the duchy of Savoy; an undertaking which presented so little difficulty that its success was certain. In vain did Marie de Medicis represent the injury which Louis must, by such an enterprise, inflict upon his sister, the project flattered the vanity of the King; and accordingly on the 14th of May the van of the French army entered the duchy, and before the middle of the ensuing month, the whole of Savoy, with the exception of Montmelian, was in the possession of his troops. This puny triumph was, however, counterbalanced and outweighed by the disasters at Casal and Mantua, the former of which, from the failure of provisions and reinforcements, fell into the hands of Spinola; while the latter, after having had twenty-five thousand of its inhabitants carried off by plague, was ultimately lost through treason, and delivered over to pillage by the Imperialist generals.

From Savoy the Cardinal endeavoured to induce Louis to advance into the Maurienne, but from this project he was strongly dissuaded by the Queen-mother, who had during the campaign in Savoy remained at Lyons with Anne of Austria, Marillac the keeper of the seals, and other discontented nobles who were opposed to the war in Italy, and were anxious at any price for peace. Negociations to that effect were moreover pending; and Urban VIII. had offered himself as

mediator through the medium of Jules Mazarin,* a young man of twenty-eight years of age, whom he had appointed internuncio for that purpose. The talent and energy displayed by the papal envoy in a position of so much difficulty enchanted Richelieu, who at once recognised in the juvenile diplomatist a congenial spirit, and he determined to attach him to the interests of France. But even while he did full justice to the precocious ability of Mazarin, the minister nevertheless bitterly complained that the violent measures adopted by the Queen-mother and her party rendered the prospect of a peace impossible;

* Jules Mazarin, better known as the Cardinal Mazarin, prime minister of France, was born at Piscina in the Abruzzi on the 14th of July, 1602, and was of a noble Sicilian family. Having completed his studies in Italy and Spain, he attached himself to the Cardinal Sacchetti whom he followed to Lombardy, and was of great assistance to the Cardinal Antonio Barbarini in concluding the peace of Quiérasqua in 1631. The reputation which he acquired through this negociation secured to him the friendship of Richelieu and the protection of Louis XIII.; and in 1639, the former obtained for him the title of papal vice-legate at Avignon, and subsequently a seat in the conclave. Nor did his good offices end even here, as he entreated Louis to appoint him counsellor of state after his own demise, a request with which the King complied; and on the death of Louis XIII. the Queen-Regent Anne of Austria confided to him the government of the kingdom. Mazarin died in 1661, leaving a fortune of 200,000,000 of francs to Armand Charles de la Porte de la Meilleraye, the husband of his niece Hortense Mancini.

and that they attached too great an importance to the pending negociations, and overacted their uneasiness on the subject of the King's health, and their terrors of the plague.* These arguments sufficed to reassure Louis XIII., who, delighted at his success in Savoy, and intoxicated by the plaudits of his courtiers, was eager to pursue a war from which he hoped to acquire fresh reputation; and accordingly, disregarding the expostulations of the peace party he advanced to St. Jean-de-Maurienne; and the aggressive measures so earnestly deprecated by Marie de Medicis were continued.

The King had, however, scarcely joined the camp when he was attacked by fever; and his condition soon became so dangerous that it was deemed expedient to remove him in a litter to Lyons, while his armies were still engaged in the sieges of Pignerol and Casal. For several days he continued hovering between life and death; and his strength was at length so utterly exhausted that his physicians believed him to be beyond all further hope.

Monarchs are mere mortals on a bed of sickness; and Louis XIII. was far from being an exception to the rule. Stubborn and wilful when in health, he no sooner became the prey of disease, and pondered over the prophecies of the astrologers who had foretold his early demise, than he suffered himself to be governed without resistance by those about him; the ties of kindred, and

* Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 142, 143.

the claims of family affection resumed their rights; duties long neglected were admitted and recognised; he bewailed the past, and despaired of the future. It was therefore not possible that such an opportunity should be neglected by Marie de Medicis, who even while watching over his sick-bed with an assiduity and care which were emulated by her royal daughter-in-law, eagerly availed herself of her advantage to shake the power of Richelieu. In this attempt she was zealously seconded by Anne of Austria; and the combined tears and entreaties of the two Queens at length so far prevailed over the inclinations of Louis as to wring from him a promise that, should he survive, he would dismiss his minister so soon as he should have once more reached the capital.

"I cannot, Madam;" he replied to the earnest solicitation of Marie de Medicis that he would act upon the instant; "comply with your request at an earlier period than that which I have named. The Cardinal is now fully occupied with the affairs of Italy, and his services are essential to their success. Let us not be precipitate. Suffer him to conclude the pending negociations; and I pledge myself, on my return to Paris, both to exclude him from the council, and to dismiss him from the government of the state."

With this assurance the Queen-mother was compelled to appear satisfied, although she panted for more immediate vengeance; and so grateful did the King

express himself for the unceasing tenderness and vigilance of the two Queens, that he listened without remonstrance to their complaints. As, contrary to the anticipations of the faculty, he rallied from the attack, he became even more indulgent; an extent of confidence and affection hitherto unknown reigned in the royal circle; and when he heard Marie and her daughter-in-law attribute all their humiliations and sufferings to the Cardinal alone, while they entirely exonerated himself, he did not scruple to deplore the misstatements of others by which he had been induced to disregard their previous expostulations.*

The convalescence of Louis was no sooner assured than he resolved to return to Paris, believing that his natal air would hasten his complete recovery; and accordingly, after having entreated Marie de Medicis to dissemble her displeasure against Richelieu until he should be prepared to dismiss him from office, the court commenced its homeward journey. The Cardinal meanwhile, although necessarily ignorant of the pledge given by the King, had learnt enough to convince him that the faction of the Queen-mother had been actively seeking to undermine his influence during the sojourn of the monarch at Lyons, and he consequently resolved to accompany the royal party to the capital; his weak health forming a sufficient pretext for this determination. Having made his final arrangements, he accordingly

* Capefigue, vol. iv, pp. 301—314. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 152, 153.

proceeded to Roanne in order to join the Queen-mother, and to endeavour during the journey to reinstate himself in her favour.

In compliance with the request of the King, Marie de Medicis met the astute minister with a dissimulation equal to his own; and even affected to feel flattered when he demanded her permission for his litter to travel immediately behind her own. It was not, however, until the royal barge had received its august freight, and began to ascend the Loire, that the Cardinal had an opportunity of fully enacting the courtly character which he had assigned to himself in this serious emergency. As the Queen-mother lay upon her couch the minister stood obsequiously beside her, beneath the crimson canopy by which she was overshadowed, occasionally dropping upon his knee in an attitude of profound and affectionate respect; a voluntary homage to which Marie replied by conversing with him in the most endearing terms; addressing him more than once as *mio caro! amico del cuore mio!* and other soft and silken appellations.

To Richelieu it seemed for the time as though the past had come back upon him, but he deceived himself; the Florentine princess had but drawn a glove over a hand of iron, a fact which he ascertained before the termination of the journey, as well as the whole extent of the intrigue at Lyons; but this knowledge did not for a moment affect his deportment towards the Queen-mother, for whom he continued to evince the deepest

veneration, while he carefully noted the bearing of those by whom she was surrounded, in order that he might one day be enabled to wreak his vengeance upon such as had participated in the cabal.

The most zealous partisans of Marie de Medicis were at this period the two Marillacs and the Dukes de Guise and de Bellegarde; while her confidential friends of her own sex were the Duchess d'Elbœuf and the Princess de Conti. Of these the most obnoxious to Richelieu was the elder Marillac, the keeper of the seals. This minister was indebted to the Cardinal for the office which he held; and even while Richelieu was plotting the ruin of his own benefactress, he could not brook that a man whom he had himself raised to power should dare to oppose his will, or to succeed him in the good graces of the Queen-mother. He had, moreover, ascertained that Marillac, who had, in the first instance, attached himself to Marie de Medicis at the suggestion of his brother the maréchal, had rendered her such good service that she had pledged herself to make him prime minister on his own dismissal. Nor was this the only cause of anxiety to which Richelieu was at this moment exposed; as during the indisposition of the King a strong affection had grown up between the two Queens, while the Duke d'Orleans no longer made an effort to conceal his animosity; and thus the Cardinal found himself placed in opposition to the whole of the royal family with the exception of the sovereign.

Gaston d'Orleans was no sooner apprised of the

approach of Louis to the capital than he hastened to Montargis to receive him, and the meeting was one of great cordiality on both sides; but the King had no sooner urged upon his brother the expediency of a reconciliation with the Cardinal, than the Prince violently complained of the indignities to which he had been subjected by Richelieu, and insisted that he had just reason to hate him. Alarmed by the unmeasured vehemence of Gaston, the King entreated him to be more calm, and to accede to his request; but Monsieur after bowing profoundly, remained silent; and shortly afterwards withdrew.

On her arrival in Paris, Marie de Medicis at once proceeded to the palace of the Luxembourg, which she had recently built, and embellished with those treasures of art which had rendered it one of the most regal residences in the kingdom. During the three first days of her sojourn there, the gates were closed, and no visitors were admitted; but on the fourth, the King, who had taken up his abode at Versailles, arrived, accompanied by the Cardinal, and followed by all the great nobles to welcome her back to Paris. Louis had no sooner saluted his mother than he remarked the absence of the Duke d'Orleans, and on expressing his surprise that the Prince had not hastened to meet him, he was informed that his Highness was indisposed. As he was about to dispatch one of his retinue with a message of condolence, Gaston was suddenly announced; who, after having paid his respects to their

Majesties, stepped back to receive the compliments of the courtiers. At this moment he was accosted by the Cardinal, but before the latter had time to utter a syllable, Monsieur abruptly turned his back upon him, and entered into conversation with the nobles who stood near. Enraged by this public affront, Richelieu immediately approached the Queen-mother, and bitterly complained of the insult to which he had been subjected; but Marie, in her turn, answered coldly: "Monsieur has merely treated you as you deserve." A retort which only served to embitter the indignation of the minister, who at once perceived that, in order to save himself from ruin, he must forthwith possess himself of the ear of the King, and strike a decisive blow.

The moment was a favourable one, as intelligence shortly afterwards reached the court that a treaty of peace with Italy on the most advantageous terms for France had been concluded, and all was consequently joy and gratulation throughout the capital. Showers of rockets ascended from the palaces of the Louvre, the Luxembourg, and St. Germain, which to the faction of Richelieu celebrated the triumph of his exploits beyond the Alps, while to that of the Queen-mother they indicated the downfall of the Cardinal, which it was anticipated would succeed the cessation of hostilities. So convinced indeed was Marie de Medicis that her time of trial was at length over that she disdained to conceal her exultation; and as the first-fruits of her presumed victory she determined to dismiss from her

service alike Richelieu himself, who had been appointed superintendent of her household, and every member of his family who was about her person.

In pursuance of this resolution she hastened to apprise the Cardinal that she declined his further offices; and before he could recover from the surprise occasioned by so abrupt an announcement, she turned towards the Marquis de la Meilleraye, the captain of her body-guard, adding in the same cold and haughty tone in which she had just addressed his kinsman; "Nor will I longer retain you here, Sir; you must also retire." Finally, as Madame de Comballet entered the apartment, unconscious of the scene which was then enacting, she applied to her the most humiliating epithets, and commanded her immediately to quit the palace. In vain did the niece of Richelieu throw herself upon her knees, weeping bitterly, and entreating the pardon of her royal mistress, without even inquiring into the nature of her offence; Marie de Medicis remained inflexible, and sternly ordered her to withdraw. The command was obeyed; and as she left the apartment Madame de Comballet was followed by the Cardinal, who, bewildered by this sudden and complicated change of events, did not even attempt to expostulate.

After this first exhibition of her recovered power the Queen-mother passed into her private cabinet, where she was shortly joined by the King; and he had no sooner entered than she desired the usher

on duty to leave the room, and to refuse ingress to all comers, be they whom they might; after which, with her own hand, she drew the heavy bolts across the doors that he had closed behind him, and returned to the King, whose gesture of surprise and annoyance she affected not to remark. She had passed the rubicon, and she felt that she had no time to lose if she did not desire to become herself the victim of the struggle in which she was engaged; and thus having announced to her son the dismissal of Richelieu and his relatives from her personal service, she continued the conversation by reminding him of the pledge which he had given at Lyons, and urging the immediate removal of the obnoxious minister from office. Louis, weak and wavering as was his wont, endeavoured to temporise, declaring that the crisis was one of too much difficulty to admit of so extreme a measure at that moment, and entreating her to sanction his delaying for a few weeks the fulfilment of his promise; but Marie was aware that she stood upon the brink of a precipice, and she became only the more importunate in her demands, and the more bitter in her sarcasms.

"Are you indeed the sovereign of France, and the son of Henry the Great?" she asked passionately; "and do you quail before a subject, and place your sceptre in other hands, when you were born to wield it in the eyes of Europe?"

"I cannot dispense with the services of the Cardinal;"

was the sullen reply; "and you would do well, Madam, to become reconciled to a man who is essential to the welfare of the kingdom."

"*Per Dio!* never—" exclaimed the Queen resolutely, while tears of rage burst from her eyes, and the blood mounted to her brow. "France, and the widow of her last monarch, can alike dispense with the good services of Armand de Richelieu, the false friend, the treacherous servant, and the ambitious statesman. It is time that both were delivered from his thrall. Do not fear, Sir, that our noble nation can produce no other minister as able, and at the same time more trustworthy than the man who, when he bends his knee before you is in heart clutching at your crown."

"What mean you, Madam?" asked the suspicious King, bounding upon his seat.

"Ask your good citizens, Sire, by whom they are governed;" was the impetuous answer of the excited Queen; "ask your nobles and barons by whom they are oppressed and thwarted, when they would feign recognise their sovereign alone as their ruler; ask your brave armies who has reaped the glory for which you have imperilled your health, and gone near to sacrifice your life. Do you shrink from the exertion necessary to the measure that I propose?" she continued as she remarked the effect of her words upon the King, whose wounded vanity revolted against the idea of being considered what he really was, a puppet

in the hands of his minister. "Dismiss the apprehension. Trusting to your royal word—and the word of an anointed monarch, Sire, is as sacred as the oath of the first subject in his realm—I have been careful to spare you all unnecessary fatigue. Here"—and as she spoke she drew a parchment from her bosom: "Here your Majesty will find, duly drawn up, an order for the instant retirement of the Cardinal, which requires only your royal signature to become valid; M. de Marillac is prepared, with your sanction, to replace him, and to serve you with equal zeal, and far more loyalty than he has done. Subscribe your name at the bottom of this document; and then ride forth into the streets of your good city of Paris, and as the news spreads among your people, see if one single voice will be raised for the recal of *Maître Gonin.*"*

As Marie de Medicis uttered these words a slight noise caused her to glance from the King towards the direction whence it proceeded; and there, standing in the opening of a door which communicated with her oratory, she saw before her the Cardinal de Richelieu.

Aware that the monarch was closeted with his mother, and apprehending the worst consequences to himself should the interview be suffered to proceed without interruption, the minister had instantly resolved to

* Maître Gonin was a *soubriquet* applied by the Parisians to the Cardinal de Richelieu.

terminate it by his own presence; and for this purpose, disregarding the affront to which he had so lately been subjected by Marie de Medicis, he hastened to her apartments; where, having found the door of the ante-chamber fastened from within, he entered a gallery which communicated with the royal closet, at the door of which he scratched to obtain admittance. As no answer was elicited, his alarm increased; the heavy drapery by which the door was veiled deadened the voices within; and after waiting for a few instants to convince himself that no ingress could be obtained save by stratagem, he proceeded along the corridor until he reached the oratory, where he found one of the waiting-women of the Queen, who, unable to withstand a heavy bribe, permitted him to penetrate into the royal closet.

At the moment of his appearance Louis was seated in a huge chair of crimson velvet, with a scroll of parchment before him, and a pen already in his hand; while Marie de Medicis stood beside him, the tears coursing each other down her cheeks, and her whole frame trembling with excitement.

"*Per Dio!*" was the first exclamation of the Queen, as she hurriedly snatched the scroll from the table, and forming it into a roll, thrust it into her girdle; "are you here, *Cardinale?*"

"I am here, Madam;" replied Richelieu with perfect composure; "and I am here because your Majesties were speaking of me."

"You are wrong, Monseigneur;" murmured the King.

"Nay, Sire;" persisted the minister turning towards Marie de Medicis; "your august mother will, I am convinced, own that such was the case."

"You are right, Sir;" admitted the Tuscan princess, no longer able or anxious to restrain her resentment; "we were speaking of you, and you had just cause to dread the results of such a conversation. We were expatiating upon your treachery, your ingratitude, and your vices; and the subject was a copious one."

"Ah, Madam!" expostulated Richelieu, as he fell upon his knees before his irritated mistress. "What have I done to forfeit your favour? How have I sacrificed your esteem?"

"*Miserabile! miserabile!*" cried the Queen-mother; "dare you ask *how*? But it is idle to bandy words with such as you; *teme mia vendetta!*"

"At least, Madam, suffer M. le Ministre to justify himself;" stammered out Louis; "he may perhaps convince you that you have wronged him."

"Wronged him!" echoed Marie with a contemptuous gesture. "Even his ready eloquence must prove powerless beside the experience of the past. Henceforward there can be no trust or fellowship between the widow of Henry the Great and her discarded servant."

"In that case, Sire;" said the Cardinal, rising from his abject posture at the feet of the Queen-mother,

and throwing himself at those of the King; "I can no longer offer my unworthy services to your Majesty, as it is not for me to contend against the will of my royal mistress."

Terrified by this threat, which renewed his sense of utter helplessness, Louis faintly endeavoured to intercede in behalf of the man upon whom he had so long leant for support; but Marie impetuously interposed.

"You have heard my decision, Sir;" she said haughtily; "and it is now for you to choose between your mother and your valet."*

Finding that all interference on his part must prove ineffectual, the King suddenly rose, remarking that it was late, and that as he had resolved to return to Versailles he had no time to lose. Richelieu, who had not yet recovered sufficient self-possession to entreat a continuance of his intercession, remained motionless as he left the room; while the indignation of the Queen-mother at so undignified a retreat rendered her equally unable to expostulate; and meanwhile Louis, delighted to escape from all participation in so dangerous a contention, sprang into the carriage which was awaiting him, and beckoning his new favourite M. de Saint-Simon to

* Motteville, Mém., vol. i, pp. 372, 373. Brienne, Mém., vol. ii, p. 12. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 154, 155. Bassompierre, Mém., vol. iii, pp. 275, 276. Gaston d'Orleans, Mém., pp. 91, 92. Le Vassor, vol. vi, pp. 538 539. Capefigue, vol. iv, pp. 320—323.

take his place beside him, set off at full speed for the suburban palace where he had taken up his temporary abode.

After the departure of the King, Richelieu made a fresh effort to overcome the anger of Marie de Medicis; he still knelt humbly before her, he supplicated, he even wept, for the Cardinal was never at a loss for tears when they were likely to produce an effect upon his hearers; but all was vain. The Queen-mother turned from him with a contemptuous gesture; and gathering her heavy drapery about her, walked haughtily from the room.

The eyes of the prostrate minister followed her as she withdrew with a glance in which all the evil passions of his soul were written as by a pen of adamant. He believed himself to be utterly lost; and as he reached the Petit Luxembourg, where he had lodged since his arrival in the capital, he gave orders that his carriages should be packed, and immediately proceed to Pontoise, on their way to Havre de Grâce, where he had hastily determined to seek an asylum.* In a few hours all was in movement in the vicinity of his residence. A long train of mules laden with what many asserted to be chests of treasure, first took the road under the escort of a body of military, with strict orders not to halt in any village lest they should be pillaged; and meanwhile the Cardinal hurriedly terminated his more important arrangements and prepared to follow.

* Bassompierre, Mém., vol. iii, p. 12. Le Vassor, vol. vi, p. 542. Siri, vol. vii, p. 285.

In this occupation he was interrupted by his fast friend the Cardinal de la Valette, by whom he was earnestly urged to forego his resolution, and instead of flying from the capital, and thus insuring the triumph of his enemies, to hasten without loss of time to Versailles, in order to plead his cause with the King. This advice, coupled as it was with the judicious representations of his brother-prelate, once more awakened the hopes of Richelieu, who ascended a carriage which was in waiting, and with renewed energy set off at all speed from Paris. This day had been one of intense suffering to the Cardinal; who, in addition to the personal humiliation to which he had been exposed, had ascertained before his intrusion into the royal closet, that Louis had, at the entreaty of the Queen-mother, already signed a letter in which he conferred upon the Maréchal de Marillac the command of his army and the direction of public affairs in Italy; and that a courier had moreover left Paris with the despatch. Nevertheless, yielding to the arguments of MM. de la Valette and Châteauneuf, Richelieu readily consoled himself by recalling the timid and unstable character of Louis, and the recollection of the eminent services which he had rendered to France. Siri even asserts that before the court left Lyons, an understanding had taken place between the King and his minister, and that the exile of Marie was then and there decided.

Be this as it may, however, it is certain that all parties believed in the utter overthrow of Richelieu;

and while he was yet on his way to Versailles, the ballad-singers of the Pont-Neuf were publicly distributing the songs and pamphlets which they had hitherto only vended by stealth; and the dwarf of the Samaritaine was delighting the crowd by his mimicry of *Maître Gonin.* At the corners of the different streets groups of citizens were exchanging congratulations; and within the palace all the courtiers were commenting upon the approaching triumph of M. de Marillac, whose attachment to the interests of the Queen-mother and the Duke d'Orleans had rendered him popular not only with the bulk of the people, but also with the Parliament. Already were the presidents and counsellors of the law-courts discussing the charges to be brought against the fallen minister in order to justify his dismissal; while the foreign ambassadors were equally alert in writing to acquaint their several courts with the overthrow of Richelieu and the supremacy of the Queen-mother.

The saloons of Marie de Medicis were crowded. All the great nobles who had hitherto haunted the antechambers of the Cardinal, and awaited his pleasure as humbly as that of the sovereign himself, now swarmed in the gilded galleries and stately halls of the Luxembourg; feathers waved and jewels flashed on every side; the wand of an enchanter had passed over the court, and the metamorphosis was complete. In the centre of this brilliant throng stood Marie de Medicis, radiant with joy, and holding the young Queen by the hand; while

Monsieur took up his station a few paces from them, laughing and jesting with his favourites.

Heaven only knows what hopes and projects were formed that day—how many air-built castles were erected which in a few brief hours were fated to vanish into thin air. Even Bassompierre, whose courtly tact had never hitherto deserted him, was blinded like the rest; and he, who had hitherto so assiduously paid his court to the Cardinal that he appeared to have forgotten the time when he was devoted heart and soul to the fortunes of the Queen-mother, suffered five days to elapse before he found leisure to bend his steps towards the Petit Luxembourg; an omission which he was subsequently destined to expiate in the dungeons of the Bastille.

Louis, meanwhile, had reached Versailles with his equerry and favourite, M. de Saint-Simon, to whom he bitterly inveighed against the violence of his mother; declaring that he could not dispense with the services of Richelieu, and that he should again have to contend against the same humiliations and difficulties which he had endured throughout the regency. As the ill-humour of the King augmented, Saint-Simon privately sent to apprise the Cardinal de la Valette of the undisguised annoyance of his Majesty, who was evidently prepared to revoke the dismissal of Richelieu should he be urged to do so; and that prelate, acting upon the suggestion, lost no time in presenting himself before the monarch.

"Cousin;" said Louis with a smile, as M. de la

Valette entered the apartment; "you must be surprised at what has taken place."

"More so, Sire, than your Majesty can possibly imagine," was the reply.

"Well then;" pursued the King; "return to the Cardinal de Richelieu, and tell him from me to come here upon the instant. He will find me an indulgent master."

M. de la Valette required no second bidding. Richelieu had concealed himself in a cottage near the palace, awaiting a favourable moment to retrieve his tottering fortunes, and he hastened to obey the welcome summons. The results of this interview even exceeded the hopes of the minister; and before he left the royal closet he was once more prime minister of France, generalissimo of the armies beyond the Alps; and carried in his hand an order signed by Louis for the transfer of the seals from M. de Marillac to his own friend and adherent Châteauneuf; together with a second for the recal of the Maréchal de Marillac, who had only on the previous day been appointed to the command of the army of Italy.*

One obstacle alone remained to the full and unlimited power of the exulting minister, who had not failed to perceive that henceforward his influence over the sovereign could never again be shaken; and that one was Marie de Medicis. Louis, even while he persecuted and

* Capefigue, vol. iv, pp. 326—331. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 156, 157.

thwarted his mother, had never ceased to fear her; and the wily minister resolved, in order the more surely to compass her ultimate disgrace, to temporise until he should have succeeded in thoroughly compromising her in the spirit of the King; an attempt which her own impetuosity and want of caution would, as he justly imagined, prove one of little difficulty after the occurrences of the day.

Thus, his first care on returning to his residence at Ruel, was to address a letter to the Queen-mother, conceived in the following terms:

"Madam,

"I am aware that my enemies, or rather those of the state, not satisfied with blaming me to your Majesty, are anxious to render you suspicious of my presence at the court, as though I only approached the King for the purpose of separating him from yourself, and of dividing those whom God has united. I trust, however, through the divine goodness, that the world will soon learn their malice; that my proceedings will be fully justified; and that innocence will triumph over calumny. It is not, Madam, that I do not esteem myself unfortunate and culpable since I have lost the favour of your Majesty; life will be odious to me so long as I am deprived of the honour of your good graces, and of that esteem which is more dear and precious to me than the grandeurs of this earth. As I owe them all to your liberal hand, I bring them and place them voluntarily at the feet of

your Majesty. Pardon, Madam, your work and your creature.

"RICHELIEU."*

Such was the policy of the astute and heartless minister. Only a few hours had elapsed since he had overthrown all the most cherished projects of Marie de Medicis; sown dissension between herself and her son; proved to her that her efforts to struggle against his superior influence were worse than idle; and now, he artfully sought to excite her indignation at his duplicity, and to compel her to reprisals which would draw down upon herself all the odium of their future estrangement. He well knew that by such a measure as that which he adopted, he must render her position untenable; for while on the one hand he overwhelmed her with professions of deference and respect, on the other he wrenched from her all hope of power, wounded her in her affections, and deprived her of the confidence of her adherents.† Bassompierre attempted to disguise his mortification at the mistake of which he had himself been guilty by designating the 11th of November on which these extraordinary events took place as the "Day of Dupes;" while the Queen-mother—whose great error had been that, instead of accompanying Louis to Versailles, and thus preventing all private intercourse

* MSS. de Béthune, v, cot. 9319.

† Le Vassor, vol. vi, pp. 539—541. Capefigue, vol. iv, pp. 324—332. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 157, 158.

with the minister, she had yielded to her vanity, and remained to listen to the congratulations of the courtiers —as she learned the ruin of all her hopes, passionately exclaimed that she had only one regret; and that one was that she had not drawn the bolt across the door leading to her oratory, in which case Richelieu would have been lost without resource.

Aware of his unpopularity with both nobles and people, the Cardinal considered it expedient to signalise his restoration to power by conferring certain favours upon individuals towards whom he had hitherto only manifested neglect and dislike. On the 19th of November he accordingly conferred the dignity of Marshals of France upon the Duke de Montmorency and the Count de Thoiras; and on the 30th of the succeeding month he restored the Duke de Vendôme to liberty, although upon conditions degrading to a great noble and the son of Henry IV.; while he purchased the favourites of Monsieur by large sums of money, and still more important promises. The latter concession at once restored the good-humour of Gaston d'Orleans; who forthwith proceeded to Versailles to pay his respects to the King, by whom he was graciously received; after which he paid a visit to the Cardinal; but Marie de Medicis and her royal daughter-in-law remained inflexible; and Louis so deeply resented their coldness towards his minister that even in public he scarcely exchanged a word with either.* For this mortification

* Bassompierre, vol. iii, pp. 280, 281.

they found, however, full compensation in the perfect understanding which had grown up between them, based on their mutual hatred of Richelieu; for while the Queen-mother dwelt upon his ingratitude and treachery, Anne of Austria was no less vehement in her complaints of his presumption in having dared to aspire to the affection of the wife of his sovereign.

As day succeeded day the two royal ladies had increased subject for discontent. The disgrace of the Marillacs had deeply wounded Marie de Medicis, who at once perceived that the blow had been aimed at herself rather than at the two brothers; and that the real motive of the Cardinal had been to weaken her party: a conviction which she openly expressed. Still she remained, to all appearance, mistress of her own actions, and retained her seat in the council; but it was far otherwise with the young Queen, whose affection for her brother having been construed by the minister into a treasonable correspondence with the Spanish cabinet, was banished to her private apartments; while she had the annoyance of seeing Mademoiselle de Hautefort exercise the most unlimited influence over the mind of the King, and perpetually accompany him on his excursions to St. Germain and Fontainebleau, not only as an invited but also as an honoured guest. Meanwhile Gaston, who was aware of the empire which he exercised over his mother, and who sought to harass the Cardinal, was assiduous in his attentions to the two Queens; a persistence which so alarmed Richelieu that

he did not hesitate to insinuate to his royal master that the Prince was more devoted to Anne of Austria than was consistent with their relative position; and thus he succeeded in arousing within the breast of Louis a jealousy as unseemly as it was unprovoked. The continued sterility of the Spanish princess and the utter estrangement of the august couple, while it irritated and mortified the young Queen, served, however, to sustain the hopes of Marie de Medicis, who looked upon her younger son as the assured heir to the crown; and supported both him and Anne in their animosity to Richelieu.

Two powerful factions consequently divided the French court at the close of the year 1630; Louis XIII. falsifying the pledge which he had given to the Queen-mother and Monsieur, had abandoned his sceptre to the grasp of an ambitious and unscrupulous minister, whose adherents, emulating the example of their sovereign, made no attempt to limit his power, or to contend against his will; while, with the sole exception of the King himself, all the royal family were leagued against an usurpation as monstrous as it was dishonouring. The sky of the courtly horizon was big with clouds; and all awaited with anxiety the outburst of the impending tempest.

At this ungenial period Louis XIII. gave a splendid entertainment at the Louvre, to which he personally bade the Cardinal, who eagerly availed himself of so favourable an opportunity of mortifying the Queen-

mother, by dividing with his sovereign the homage and adulation of the great nobles. Already had many of the guests arrived; and amid the flourish of trumpets, the melody of the royal musicians, the glare of torches, and the rustling of silks and cloth of gold, the great staircase and the grand gallery were rapidly becoming crowded; while groups might be seen scattered through the state apartments, conversing in suppressed tones; some anxiously expecting the entrance of the King, and others as impatiently awaiting the arrival of the all-powerful minister. One of these, and that perhaps the most inimical of all that brilliant assembly to the Cardinal, was composed of the two MM. de Marillac, the Duke de Guise, and the Marquis de Bassompierre. As they conversed earnestly together, the three first-named nobles remained grave and stern, as though they had met together to discuss some subject of vital and absorbing interest rather than to participate in the festival of a monarch; while even Bassompierre himself seemed ill at ease, and strove in vain to assume his usual light and frivolous demeanour.

"The Eminence moves tardily to-night;" he said in reply to a remark of the duke. "Can it be that we shall not have the honour of seeing him exhibit his crimson robes on this magnificent occasion?"

"It would seem so;" was the moody rejoinder; "for time wears, and the King himself cannot delay his entrance much longer. Be wary, gentlemen, for should

Richelieu indeed arrive, he will be dangerous to-night. I watched him narrowly at noon, and I remarked that he smiled more than once when there was no visible cause for mirth; and you well know what his smiles portend."

"Too well;" said the Maréchal de Marillac; "death, or at best disgrace to some new victim. Shame to our brave France that she should submit even for a day to be thus priest-ridden!"

By an excess of caution the four nobles had gradually retreated to an obscure recess, half concealed by some heavy drapery; and Bassompierre, in an attitude of easy indifference, stood leaning against the tapestried panels that divided the sumptuous apartment which they occupied from an inner cabinet that had not been thrown open to the guests. Unfortunately, however, the peculiar construction of this closet, for it was little more, was unknown even to the brilliant gentleman of the bed-chamber, or he would have been at once aware that they could not have chosen a more dangerous position in which to treat any forbidden topic. The trite proverb that "walls have ears" was perhaps never more fully exemplified than when applied to those of the Louvre at that period; many of them, and those all connected with the more public apartments, being composed of double panelling, between which a sufficient space had been left to admit the passage of an eavesdropper; and the closet in question chanced to be one of these convenient lurking-places. A slight

stir in the courtly crowd had for a moment interrupted the conversation, but as it almost immediately subsided, the subject by which the imprudent courtiers were engrossed, was resumed; and meanwhile the Cardinal-minister had arrived at the palace. He was not, however, attended by his train of gentlemen and guards: his name had not been announced by the royal ushers; nor had he yet joined the gorgeous company who were all prepared to do him honour. Since his interview with the King at Versailles he had apprehended treachery, and had consequently resolved to leave no means untried to discover the truth of his suspicions. Various circumstances had tended to point those suspicions towards Bassompierre; and anxious, if possible, to test their validity, he determined to make an effort to surprise the incautious noble during a moment of frivolity and recklessness. Acting upon this impulse, he threw aside his ecclesiastical dress, and assuming that of a private citizen, as he was frequently in the habit of doing when he desired to escape observation,* he alighted from his carriage near the Tuileries, and gained the Louvre on foot, entirely unattended.

On reaching the palace he inquired of the officer on duty if M. de Bassompierre had yet arrived.

"He has, Monseigneur;" replied the captain of the

* "C'était son habitude. Il sortait souvent les nuits, quand il allait en aventures amoureuses, ou pour surveiller lui-même les menées de ses nombreux ennemies."—*Blaisot, Manuscript Memoirs of a Benedictine Monk.*

royal guard; "the marshal and several of his friends were conversing when I last traversed the blue saloon, near the book-closet of his Majesty."

Richelieu nodded his thanks; and hastily turning into a side-gallery, he made his way to the treacherous closet by a private staircase, followed by the Père Joseph who had been awaiting him, and in a few minutes they found themselves in the immediate neighbourhood of their intended victim.

During this time the King, the two Queens, and the Duke d'Orleans had made their entrance, and were slowly passing round the several saloons, uttering courteous welcomes to the assembled guests; and the royal party had no sooner swept by the group to which we have alluded, than the Duke de Guise exclaimed disdainfully: "Richelieu has learnt to fear at last! Here is the King, and he has not yet ventured to trust his sacred person within the grasp of his enemies."

"He does well;" said the younger Marillac; "for he is perhaps aware that although the wolf may prowl for awhile in safety, he is not always able to regain his lair with equal security. Is there no man bold enough to deliver the kingdom from this monster? Has he not yet shed blood enough? Let his fate be once placed in my hands, and it shall soon be decided by the headsman."

"Heard you that?" whispered the Cardinal to his companion, as he wiped away the cold perspiration from

his forehead, and again applied his ear to the wainscoted partition.

"Nay, nay, Maréchal;" interposed de Guise with a bitter laugh; "you are inexorable! Let the man live, and do not seek to emulate his bloodthirstiness. His exile will content me, provided that it be accompanied by the confiscation of his ill-gotten wealth."

"So, so; you are indulgent, Monsieur le Duc—" again murmured Richelieu.

"For my part," said Bassompierre with affected clemency; "I do not advocate such extreme measures; there is no lack of accommodation in the Bastille; why send him on his travels either in this world or the next when he can be so snugly housed, and at so small an outlay to the state, until his Satanic Majesty sees fit to fetch him home?"

"Do not seek to pollute the ancient edifice by such a tenant;" said the elder Marillac; "good men and gallant soldiers are at times housed in the fortress, who would ill brook the companionship of such a room-fellow. Have you forgotten our galleys, M. de Bassompierre? His Eminence would there bask in a southern sun as clear as his own conscience."

These words had scarcely escaped the lips of the speaker, when close beside, and even as it seemed in the very midst of the incautious group, was heard the hard dry cough of the subject of their discourse. It was a sound not to be mistaken; and as it fell upon their ears the four nobles started, gazed upon each other, and grew

pale with a terror which they were unable to control. They at once felt that they had been overheard, and that their fate was sealed. In another instant, and without exchanging a word, they separated; but the die was cast, and the precaution came too late.

The Cardinal had no sooner assured himself that the conference was at an end, than he emerged from his hiding-place; and advancing to the centre of the closet, he cast himself heavily upon a seat, exclaiming with bitter irony: "What think you, my reverend Father, are not these wily conspirators? Are not these prudent and proper counsellors for an ambitious and headstrong woman? But they have done me good service, and I thank them. Let me see; I love justice, and I must not wrong even those who have the will to be less forbearing to myself. A pen, Joseph, a pen; lest my memory prove treacherous, and I disappoint their tastes."

The Capuchin hastened to obey: writing implements stood upon the table near which the Cardinal was seated; and in another moment he was scratching, in the ill-formed and straggling characters peculiar to him, upon the back of a despatch.

"So, so;" he muttered between his clenched teeth; "the gallant Maréchal de Marillac has an affection for the block: so be it; a scaffold is easily constructed. And M. de Guise is an amateur of exile and of beggary; truly it were a pity to thwart his fancy; and France can well spare a prince or two, without making bankrupt of her dignity. Bassompierre, the volatile and restless

Bassompierre, the hero of the court dames, and the idol of the court ballets, favours the seclusion of a prison; there is space enough for him in the one which he has selected, and his gorgeous habiliments will produce the happiest effect when contrasted with the gloomy walls of the good old fortress. And my colleague, my destined successor, did he not talk of the galleys? I had never given him credit for sufficient energy to prefer the oar to the pen, and the chain of a felon to the seals of a minister of state; but since he will have it so, on the soul of Jean du-Plessis, so shall it be!"

And as he terminated this envenomed monologue, the Cardinal thrust the fatal paper into his breast, and clasped his hands convulsively together; his dim eyes flashed fire, his thin lips quivered, his pale countenance became livid, and the storm of concentrated passion shook his frail form as with an ague-fit.

"The day is your own;" said the Capuchin calmly; "you are now face to face with your enemies, and you know all the joints in their armour. Every blow may be rendered a mortal one."

Richelieu smiled. The paroxysm of fury had subsided, and he was once more cold, and stern, and self-possessed. "We lose time;" he said; "and I have yet to play the courtier. Are my robes ready?"

"All is prepared;" quietly replied his companion, as he withdrew from the closet, where he shortly reappeared laden with the sumptuous costume of his friend and patron. A few minutes sufficed for the necessary

metamorphosis; the citizen-raiment was cast aside, the crimson drapery flung over the shoulders of its owner, the jewelled cross adjusted on his breast; and before the detected nobles had recovered from their consternation, the cardinal was solemnly traversing the crowded saloons surrounded by the adulation of the assembled nobles. As he advanced to pay his respects to the sovereigns, he encountered Bassompierre, whom he greeted with a smile of more than usual cordiality; and the Duke de Guise, to whom he addressed a few words of courteous recognition; but the one felt that the smile was a stab, and the other that the greeting was a menace.

History has taught us the justice of those forebodings.

And still the festival went on; the fairest women of the court fluttered and glittered like gilded butterflies from place to place; princes and nobles, attired in all the gorgeous magnificence of the time, formed a living mosaic of splendour on the marble floors; floating perfumes escaped from jewelled casolets; light laughter was blent with music, and with song; the dance sped merrily; and heaps of gold rapidly exchanged owners at the play-tables. Nor was the scene less dazzling without; the environs of the Louvre were brilliantly illuminated; fireworks ascended from floating rafts anchored in the centre of the river; and troops of comedians, conjurers, and soothsayers, thronged all the avenues of the palace. It was truly a regal *fête;* and when the dawn began to gleam, pale and calm through

the open casements, a hundred voices echoed the parting salutation of the Cardinal-minister to his royal host, as he said, bowing profoundly: "None save yourself, Sire, could have afforded to his guests so vivid a glance of fairy-land as we have had to-night. Not a shade of gloom, not a care for the future, can have intruded itself in such a scene of enchantment. I appeal to those around me. How say you, M. de Guise? and you, M. de Bassompierre? Shall we not depart hence with light hearts and tranquil spirits, grateful for so many hours of unalloyed and almost unequalled happiness?"

The silence of the two nobles to whom his Eminence had thus addressed himself fortunately passed unobserved amid the chorus of assenting admiration which burst forth on all sides; and with this final strain of the moral rack the Cardinal took his leave of the two foredoomed victims of his vengeance.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1631.]

RICHELIEU INTERDICTS ALL CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN ANNE OF AUSTRIA AND THE KING OF SPAIN—THE QUEEN ASKS PERMISSION TO RETIRE TO VAL DE GRÂCE — HER PERSECUTION BY THE CARDINAL — MARIE DE MEDICIS PROTECTS HER INTERESTS—MONSIEUR PLEDGES HIMSELF TO SUPPORT HER CAUSE — GASTON DEFIES THE MINISTER — ALARM OF RICHELIEU — HE RESOLVES TO EFFECT THE EXILE OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—MONSIEUR QUITS THE CAPITAL—SUPERSTITION OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—AN UNEQUAL STRUGGLE—FATHER JOSEPH AND HIS PATRON —THE QUEEN-MOTHER RESOLVES TO ACCOMPANY HER SON TO ITALY —RICHELIEU ASSURES THE KING THAT MARIE AND GASTON HAVE ORGANISED A CONSPIRACY AGAINST HIS LIFE—THE COURT PROCEED TO COMPIÈGNE—THE QUEEN-MOTHER REFUSES TO RETAIN HER SEAT IN THE COUNCIL — RICHELIEU REGAINS ALL HIS INFLUENCE OVER THE KING—REVENGE OF THE CARDINAL UPON HIS ENEMIES — DESPERATE POSITION OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—HER ARREST IS DETERMINED UPON BY THE COUNCIL — LOUIS LEAVES HER A PRISONER AT COMPIÈGNE — PARTING INTERVIEW OF THE TWO QUEENS — INDIGNITY OFFERED TO ANNE OF AUSTRIA—DEATH OF THE PRINCESS DE CONTI—INDIGNATION OF THE ROYAL PRISONER—A DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE—TWO NOBLE GAOLERS—THE ROYAL TROOPS PURSUE MONSIEUR—THE ADHERENTS OF GASTON ARE DECLARED GUILTY OF LÈSE-MAJESTÉ—GASTON ADDRESSES A DECLARATION TO THE PARLIAMENT—THE QUEEN-MOTHER FORWARDS A SIMILAR PROTEST, AND THEN APPEALS TO THE PEOPLE—A PAPER WAR — THE GARRISON IS WITHDRAWN FROM COMPIÈGNE — MARIE RESOLVES TO EFFECT HER ESCAPE TO THE LOW COUNTRIES—SHE IS ASSURED OF THE PROTECTION OF SPAIN AND GERMANY—THE QUEEN-MOTHER SECRETLY LEAVES THE FORTRESS—SHE IS BETRAYED BY THE MARQUIS DE VARDES, AND PROCEEDS WITH ALL SPEED TO HAINAULT, PURSUED BY THE ROYAL TROOPS—SHE IS RECEIVED AT MONS BY THE ARCHDUCHESS ISABELLA—WHENCE SHE ADDRESSES A LETTER TO THE

KING TO EXPLAIN THE MOTIVES OF HER EVASION—REPLY OF LOUIS XIII. —SYMPATHY OF ISABELLA—THE TWO PRINCESSES PROCEED TO BRUSSELS —TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF MARIE DE MEDICIS INTO THE CAPITAL OF FLANDERS—RENEWED HOPES OF THE EXILED QUEEN—THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR AT THE FRENCH COURT—VINDICTIVE COUNSELS OF THE CARDINAL—THE PROPERTY OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER AND MONSIEUR IS CONFISCATED—THEY ARE ABANDONED BY MANY OF THEIR ADHERENTS —RICHELIEU IS CREATED A DUKE—A KING AND HIS MINISTER—MARIE CONSENTS TO THE MARRIAGE OF MONSIEUR WITH MARGUERITE OF LORRAINE—THE FOLLOWERS OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER AND THE DUKE D'ORLEANS ARE TRIED AND CONDEMNED—LOUIS XIII. PROCEEDS TO LORRAINE TO PREVENT THE PROJECTED ALLIANCE OF HIS BROTHER— INTRIGUES OF GASTON—PHILIP OF SPAIN REFUSES TO ADOPT THE CAUSE OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—MARRIAGE OF MONSIEUR AND THE PRINCESS OF LORRAINE — THE QUEEN-MOTHER ENDEAVOURS TO NEGOCIATE HER RETURN TO FRANCE — RICHELIEU DETERMINES THE KING NOT TO CONSENT — CHARLES OF LORRAINE MAKES HIS SUBMISSION TO THE FRENCH MONARCH—AND SIGNS A COMPULSATORY TREATY.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1631.]

In order, as he asserted, to protect the interests of France, Richelieu had strictly forbidden all further correspondence between Anne of Austria and her royal brother Philip of Spain; and had further informed her that she would no longer be permitted to receive the Marquis de Mirabel, the Spanish ambassador, who had hitherto been her constant visitor and the medium of her intercourse with her family. Indignant at such an interference with her most private feelings, Anne revolted against a tyranny which aroused her southern pride; and complaining that the close confinement to which she was subjected at the Louvre had affected her health, she demanded permission to retire to Val de Grâce; a proposal which was eminently grateful to the Cardinal, who desired above all things to separate her from the Queen-mother. She had, however, no sooner left the palace than she caused M. de Mirabel to be apprised of

the place of her retreat; at the same time informing him that she should continue to expect his visits, although he must thenceforward make them as privately as possible. In compliance with these instructions, the ambassador alighted from his carriage at some distance from Val de Grâce, and proceeded on foot to the convent, generally towards the dusk of the evening, believing that by these precautions he should be enabled to baffle the vigilance of the watchful minister. He was, however, soon destined to be undeceived, as Richelieu having ascertained the fact, openly denounced these meetings in the council, expatiating upon the fatal effects of which they might be productive to France; while Marie de Medicis boldly supported her daughter-in-law, declaring that any minister who presumed to give laws to the wife of his sovereign, exceeded his privilege, and must be prepared to encounter her legitimate and authorised opposition.

In this assertion she was, moreover, supported by the Duke d'Orleans, who considered himself aggrieved by the non-performance of the promises made by Richelieu to his favourites. He had, it is true, in his turn pledged himself to the King that he would no longer oppose the measures of the minister; but the pledges of Monsieur were known to be as unstable as water; and his chivalrous spirit was moreover aroused by the harsh treatment of his young and beautiful sister-in-law, with whom he passed a great portion of his time. More than once he had surprised her bathed

in tears, had listened to the detail of her wrongs, and soothed her sorrows; and, finally, he had vowed to revenge them.

It would appear that on this occasion at least he was in earnest, as on the 1st of January, 1631, when the intense cold rendered the outward air almost unendurable, and the Cardinal had remained throughout the whole morning in his easy chair, rolled up in furs, beside a blazing fire, Monsieur was suddenly announced, and immediately entered the apartment, followed by a numerous train of nobles. Richelieu rose in alarm to receive him, for he remembered a previous visit of Monsieur which was as unexpected as the present one, and probably not more threatening.

"To what, Sir;" he asked with a slight tremor in his voice, as he advanced towards the Prince with a profound bow; "am I to attribute the honour of this unexpected favour?"

"To my anxiety to apprise you," said Gaston without returning his salutation; "that it was contrary to my own inclination that I lately promised you my friendship. I recal that promise, for I cannot keep it to a man of your description, who moreover insults my mother."

As the Prince ceased speaking the nobles by whom he was accompanied laid their hands upon their swords, and the petrified Cardinal stood speechless and motionless before them, unable to articulate a syllable.

"As for myself;" pursued Gaston; "I have too

long submitted to your insolence, and you deserve that I should chastise you as I would a lacquey. Your priestly robe alone protects you from my vengeance; but beware! You are now warned; and henceforward nothing shall form your security against the chastisement reserved for those who outrage persons of my quality. For the present I shall retire to Orleans, but you will soon hear of me again at the head of an armed force; and then, Monsieur le Cardinal, we will decide which shall hold precedence in France, a prince of the blood royal, or a nameless adventurer."

With this threat, Monsieur turned and left the room, closely followed by the Cardinal, whom he overwhelmed with insult until he had descended the stairs; and even while the pale and agitated minister obsequiously held the stirrup to assist him to mount, he continued his vituperations; then, snatching at the bridle, he dashed through the gates, and disappeared at full speed with his retinue.*

Alarmed at the menacing attitude assumed by the Duke d'Orleans, Richelieu renewed his attempts to conciliate the Queen-mother, not only personally, but also through the medium of those about her. All these efforts, however, proved abortive; and although the King himself deeply and openly resented her resolute estrangement from the Cardinal by whom he

* Capefigue, vol. v, pp. 23—25. Sismondi, vol xxiii, pp. 159, 160. Bassompierre, vol. iii, p. 281. Brienne, vol. ii, pp. 23, 24.

was at this period entirely governed, nothing could induce her to listen to such a proposal; and she was further strengthened in her determination by the representations of her partisans, who constantly assured her of her popularity with the people, and asserted that they were loud in their denunciations of the weakness of the sovereign, and the tyranny of his minister; while they anticipated from their experience of the past that she would, by maintaining her own dignity, place some curb upon the encroaching ambition of a man who was rapidly undermining the monarchy, and sapping the foundations of the throne.

Having failed in this endeavour, Richelieu resolved no longer to delay his cherished project of effecting the exile of his former benefactress; and as a preliminary measure, he no sooner ascertained that the Duke d'Orleans had indeed retired to his government than he insinuated to Louis that Monsieur had been instigated to this overt act of opposition by the counsels of Marie de Medicis. When reproached with this new offence, the Queen-mother denied that she had encouraged the Prince to leave the capital; bitterly remarking that she was not so rich in friends as to desire the absence of any who still remembered that she was the mother and mother-in-law of the two greatest monarchs in Europe; that she had given one Queen to England, another to Spain, and a female sovereign to Savoy; and that she was moreover the widow of Henry the Great.

Little credence was, however, voushsafed to these disclaimers; the Cardinal coldly remarking that Gaston never acted save in conformity with her will; and Louis loudly declaring that his brother had been urged to his disobedience entirely by herself, in order to gratify her hatred of his minister.*

The struggle continued. Encouraged by her adherents, and calculating on the feeble health of the King, who had never rallied from the severe attack by which he had been prostrated at Lyons, Marie de Medicis still flattered herself that she should ultimately triumph; an opinion in which she was confirmed by the astrologers, in whom, as we have already shown, she placed the most unbounded faith. One of these charlatans had assured her that at the close of the year 1631 she would be more powerful and fortunate than she had ever before been; and she had such perfect confidence in the prophecy that when it was uttered, although at that period surrounded by difficulty and danger, she had replied with a calm and satisfied smile: "That is sufficient. I have therefore now only to be careful of my health."

The retirement of Monsieur to Orleans tended to strengthen these idle and baseless hopes; and the flatterers of the Queen-mother consequently found little difficulty in persuading her that ere long half the nation would rise to avenge her wrongs; that all the great nobles would rally round the Duke d'Orleans;

* Capefigue, vol. v, pp. 31, 32. Bassompierre, vol. iii, p. 282.

and that the principal cities, weary of the despotism of Richelieu, would declare in favour of the heir-presumptive, in the event of the King still seeking to support his obnoxious minister.

Misled by these assurances, and consulting only her own passions, Marie de Medicis no longer hesitated. She refused to acknowledge the authority of the Cardinal, not only as regarded her own personal affairs, but also in matters of state; and absented herself from the council, loudly declaring that her only aim in life hereafter would be to accomplish his ruin. The infatuated Princess had ceased to remember that she was braving no common adversary, and that she was heaping up coals of fire which could not fail one day to fall back upon her own head; for resolute, fearless, and vehement as she was, she had to contend against the first diplomatist of the age, whose whole career had already sufficiently demonstrated that he was utterly uninfluenced by those finer feelings which have so frequently prevented a good man from becoming great. What were to Richelieu the memories of the past? Mere incitives to the ambition of the future. Concini had been his first friend, and he had abandoned him to the steel of the assassin so soon as his patronage had become oppressive. Marie herself had overwhelmed him with benefits, but she had now lost her power, and he who had won, was resolved to wear it. He had dared to talk of passion to the wife of his sovereign, by whom he had been repulsed, and fearfully had he resented

the affront. Such a man was no meet antagonist for the impulsive and imprudent Princess who had now entered the lists against him; and the issue of the conflict was certain.

Richelieu meekly bent his head before the storm of words by which he was assailed, but he did not remain inactive. Having resolved to terminate a rivalry for power which disorganised all his measures and fettered all his movements; and, moreover, to retain the influence which he had acquired over the spirit of the weak and indolent monarch; he held long and frequent conferences with the Capuchin Father Joseph, in which it was finally decided that the Cardinal should induce his royal master to exile his mother to Moulins or some other fortified city at a distance from the capital, under a strong guard; and afterwards to surprise Monsieur and take him prisoner, before he should have time to fortify himself in Orleans, or to establish his residence in a frontier province where he could be assisted by the Emperor of Germany or the King of Spain; both of whom were at that moment earnestly endeavouring to foment discord in the French court, and would not fail to embrace so favourable an opportunity, should time be allowed for the Prince to solicit their aid.

Had Marie de Medicis possessed more caution, Richelieu might well have doubted his power to induce her to leave the capital, where her popularity would have insured her safety; but he had not forgotten

that when he sought to dissuade her from following her son in his Italian campaign, she had resolutely replied: "I will accompany the King wherever he may see fit to go; and I will never cease to demand justice upon the author of the dissensions which now embitter the existence of the royal family."

Convinced that she would keep her word, and anxious to see her safely beyond the walls of Paris, the Cardinal accordingly began to impress more urgently than ever upon Louis his conviction that a conspiracy had been formed against his authority, if not against his life; and that not only the Queen-mother and Monsieur were involved in this nefarious plot, but also some of the greatest nobles and ladies of the court. As he had anticipated the King at once took alarm, and entreated him to devise some method by which he might evade so great a danger.

"Your Majesty may rest assured that I have not neglected so imperative a duty;" replied Richelieu with a calm smile which at once tended to reassure his royal dupe. "If the peril be great, the means of escape are easy. You have only, Sire, to leave Paris, and organise a hunt at Compiègne. The Queen-mother will no doubt follow you thither; in which case we will profit by the opportunity to make her such advantageous offers as may induce her to accede to your wishes, and to separate herself from the cabal; and even in the event of her declining the journey, and remaining in Paris during your absence, we may equally succeed in

removing from about her person the individuals who are now labouring to excite her discontent; and this object once attained, there can be little doubt that she will become more yielding and submissive. Monsieur is, as I am informed, about to levy troops in the different provinces, and to provoke a civil war; but he will, as a natural consequence, abandon this project when deprived of the support of the Queen, and will be ready to make his submission when he is no longer in correspondence with her Majesty."

Louis eagerly acceded to the suggestion of the crafty Cardinal, and desired that preparations might be made for his departure in the course of the ensuing month; expressing at the same time his sense of the service rendered to him by the minister.* Richelieu felt the whole extent of his triumph. Once beyond the walls of Paris, Marie de Medicis was in the toils, and her overthrow was assured; while, as he had anticipated, on being informed of the projected journey, she at once declared her determination to accompany the King, and resolutely refused to listen to the exhortations of her friends, by whom she was earnestly dissuaded from leaving the capital.

"You argue in vain;" she said firmly. "If I had only followed the King to Versailles, the Cardinal would now be out of France, or in a prison. May it please God that I never again commit the same error!"

* Le Vassor, vol. vi, pp. 628—632. Brienne, vol. ii, p. 24. Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 384.

In accordance with this decision the Queen-mother accordingly made the necessary preparations; and on the 17th of February the court set forth for Compiègne, to the great satisfaction of the minister; who, well aware of the impossibility of accomplishing any reconciliation with his indignant mistress, lost no time in entreating Louis to endeavour once more to effect this object. Richelieu desired to appear in the *rôle* of a victim, while he was in fact the tyrant of this great domestic drama; but the weak sovereign was incompetent to unravel the tangled mesh of his wily policy; and it was therefore with eagerness that he lent himself to this new subterfuge.

Vautier was, as we have stated, not only the physician but also the confidential friend of Marie de Medicis; and the King consequently resolved to avail himself of his influence. He was accordingly summoned to the royal presence, and there Louis expressed to him his earnest desire that the past should be forgotten, and that henceforward his mother and himself might live in peace and amity; to which end he declared it to be absolutely essential that the Queen should forego her animosity to the Cardinal.

"I have faith in your fidelity, Sir;" he said graciously; "and I request of you to urge this upon her Majesty, for I am weary of these perpetual broils. Assure her in my name that if she will consent to my wishes in this respect, and assist as she formerly did at the council, she will secure alike my affection and my respect. She must, moreover, give a written pledge not to com-

promise the safety of the state by any political intrigue, and to abandon to my just resentment all such persons as may hereafter incur my displeasure, with the exception only of the members of her immediate household. On these conditions I am ready to forgive and to forget the events of the last few months."

To this proposition Marie de Medicis replied that her most anxious desire was to live in good intelligence with her son and sovereign, but that she could not consent to occupy a seat in the council with Richelieu, nor to give in writing a pledge to which her royal word should be a sufficient guarantee, as she considered that both the one concession and the other would be unworthy of her dignity as a Queen, and her self-respect as a woman.

Such was precisely the result which had been anticipated by the astute Cardinal, who, as he cast himself at the feet of the King, bitterly inveighed against the inflexibility of Marie, and renewed his entreaties that he might be permitted to resign office, and to withdraw for ever from a court where he had been so unhappy as to cause dissension between the two persons whom he most loved and honoured upon earth. This was the favourite expedient of Richelieu, who always saw the pale cheek of Louis become yet paler under the threat; and on the present occasion it was even more successful than usual. Ever ready to credit the most extravagant reports when they involved his personal safety, the King looked upon the Cardinal as the only barrier between himself and

assassination; and impressed with this conviction, he raised him up, embraced him fervently, and assured him that no consideration should ever induce him to dispense with his services; that the enemies of Richelieu were his enemies; the friends of Richelieu his friends; and that he held himself indebted to his devotion not only for his throne, but for his life. The minister received his acknowledgments with well-acted humility; and encouraged by the success of his first attempt, resolved to profit by the opportunity thus afforded him to complete the work of vengeance which he had so skilfully commenced. He consequently declared that it was with reluctance he was compelled to admit, that although by the gracious consent of his Majesty to adopt the measures which he had formerly proposed, the peril at which he had hinted had been greatly lessened, it was nevertheless essential to prevent the reorganisation of so dangerous a cabal; and that in order to do this effectually it became imperative upon the King to arrest, and even to exile, certain individuals who had been involved in the intrigue.

At that moment Louis, who considered that he had been delivered from almost certain destruction through the perspicacity and zeal of his minister, felt no disposition to dissent from any of his views, and he unhesitatingly expressed his readiness to sanction whatever measures he might deem necessary; upon which Richelieu, without further preamble, laid before him the list of his intended victims. At the head of these

figured Bassompierre, whose recent abandonment the vindictive Cardinal had not forgotten, and the two Marillacs. The Abbé de Foix, and the physician Vautier, both of whom were in the confidence of the Queen-mother, were also destined to expiate their fidelity to her cause in the Bastille; while the Princess de Conti and the Duchesses d'Elbœuf, d'Ornano, de Lesdiguières, and de Roannés, all of whom were her fast friends, were sentenced to banishment; and it was further decided that, on his departure from Compiègne, the King should leave his mother in that city under the guard of the Maréchal d'Estrées, at the head of nearly a thousand men, exclusive of fifty gendarmes and as many light-horse; and that he should be accompanied to the capital by Anne of Austria, in order to separate her from the Queen-mother.*

The situation of Marie de Medicis was desperate. Day after day she solicited a private interview with the monarch, and on every occasion of their meeting she found Richelieu in the royal closet, invulnerable alike to her disdain and to her sarcasm. One word from the King would of course have compelled him to withdraw, but that word was never uttered; for with the timidity inherent to a weak mind, Louis dreaded to be left alone with his destined victim. Bigoted and superstitious, he had his moments of remorse, in which his conscience reproached him for the crime of which he was about to render himself guilty towards the author of his exist-

* Capefigue, vol. v, pp. 34, 35.

ence; but those fastened upon him only during the absence of his minister, and thus he overcame them by the constant companionship of the stronger spirit by whom he was ruled. Unable to act of himself, the purple robes of the cardinal were his safeguard and his refuge; nor was Richelieu unwilling to accept the responsibility thus thrust upon him. His Eminence had no scruples, no weaknesses, no misgivings; he knew his power, and he exercised it without shrinking. Had the unhappy Queen been permitted only a few hours of undisturbed communion with her son, it is probable that she might have awakened even in his selfish bosom other and better feelings; she might have taught him to listen to the voice of nature and of conscience; the mother's heart might have triumphed over the statesman's head; but no such opportunity was afforded to her; and while she was still making infructuose efforts to attain her object, the King, at the instigation of the Cardinal, summoned a privy council, at which Châteauneuf, the new keeper of the seals and the tool of Richelieu, openly accused her not only of ingratitude to the monarch, but also of entertaining a secret correspondence with the Spanish cabinet, and of having induced Monsieur to leave the country; and concluded by declaring that stringent measures should be adopted against her.

When desired to declare his opinion on this difficult question, Richelieu at first affected great unwillingness to interfere, alleging that he was personally interested in

the result; but the King having commanded him to speak, he threw off all restraint, and represented the Queen-mother as the focus of all the intrigues both foreign and domestic by which the nation was convulsed; together with the utter impossibility of insuring the safety of the King so long as she remained at liberty to pursue the policy which she had seen fit to adopt, alike against the sovereign and the state. In conclusion, he emphatically reminded his hearers that weak remedies only tended to aggravate great evils, while on the contrary they were overcome by those apportioned to their magnitude; and that consequently, at such a crisis as that under consideration, there was but one alternative: either to effect a peace with foreign powers on sure and honourable terms, or to conciliate the Queen-mother and the Duke d'Orleans; either to dismiss himself from office, or to remove from about the person of the Queen the individuals by whom she was instigated to opposition against the will of the King and the welfare of the state; and to beg of her to absent herself for some time from the court, lest, without desiring to do so, she should by her presence induce a continuance of the disorder which it was the object of all loyal subjects to suppress. He then craftily insisted upon the peculiar character of Marie herself, whom he painted in the most odious colours. He declared her to be false and revengeful; qualities which he attributed to her Italian origin, and to her descent from the Medici, who never forgave an injury

and, finally, he stated that all which they had to decide was, whether it would be most advantageous to the King to dismiss from office a minister who had unfortunately become obnoxious to the whole of the royal family, in order to secure peace in his domestic circle, or to exile the Queen-mother and those who encouraged her in her animosity against him. As regarded himself, he said proudly, that could his absence from the court tend to heal the existing dissensions, he was ready to depart upon the instant, and should do so without hesitation or remonstrance; but that it remained to be seen if his retirement would suffice to satisfy the malcontents; or whether they would not, by involving others in his overthrow, endeavour to possess themselves of the supreme authority.

This insinuation, insolent as it was (for it intimated no less than the utter incapacity of Louis to uphold his own prerogative, and the probability that Richelieu once removed, Marie de Medicis would resume all her former power), produced a visible effect upon the King.

"My conviction is therefore;" concluded the Cardinal: "that his Majesty should annihilate the faction sanctioned by the Queen-mother, by requesting her to retire to a distance from the capital, and by removing from about her person the evil counsellors who have instigated her to rebellion; but that this should be done with great consideration, and with all possible respect.

And as by these means the cabal would be dispersed, and my colleagues in the ministry be thus enabled once more to serve the sovereign and the state in perfect security, I humbly solicit of his Majesty the royal permission to tender my resignation."

This climax as usual instantly decided Louis XIII., although as a necessary form he demanded the collective opinion of the council; who, one and all, represented the retirement of the Cardinal from office as an expedient at once dangerous and impracticable. The die was cast; and after a few vague and puerile expressions of regret at the necessity thus forced upon him of once more separating himself from his mother, Louis pronounced the banishment of Marie de Medicis from the court, and then retired from the hall leaning upon the arm of Richelieu, who found little difficulty in convincing him of the expediency of taking his departure before his intention became known to the ill-fated Queen.*

This advice was peculiarly welcome to the cowardly King, who dreaded above all things the reproaches and tears of his widowed and outraged mother; and accordingly, on the 23rd of February, he was on foot at three in the morning; and had no sooner completed his toilette than he sent to desire the presence of the Jesuit Suffren his confessor.

"When the Queen my mother shall have awoke;"

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 384—388. Capefigue, vol. v, pp. 32—34.

he said hurriedly; "do not fail to inform her that I regret to take my departure without seeing her; and that in a few days I will acquaint her with my wishes."

Such was his last greeting to the unhappy Princess, who had gone to rest without one suspicion that on the morrow she should find herself a prisoner, abandoned by her son, and bereaved of her dearest friends; and meanwhile another scene was taking place in a distant wing of the palace, which has been so graphically described by Madame de Motteville that we shall transcribe it in her own words:

"At day-dawn some one knocked loudly at the door of the Queen's chamber. On hearing this noise, Anne of Austria, whom it had awakened, called her women, and inquired whether it was the King who demanded admittance, as he was the only individual who was entitled to take so great a liberty. While giving this order she drew back the curtain of her bed, and perceiving with alarm that it was scarcely light, a vague sentiment of terror took possession of her mind. As she was always doubtful, and with great reason, of the King's feeling towards her, she persuaded herself that she was about to receive some fatal intelligence, and apprehended that the least evil which she had to apprehend was her exile from France. Regarding this moment, therefore, as one which must decide the whole of her future destiny, she endeavoured to recal her self-possession in order to meet the blow with

becoming courage . . . . and when the first shock of her terror had passed by, she determined to receive submissively whatever trial Heaven might see fit to inflict upon her. She consequently commanded that the door of her apartment should be opened; and as her first *femme de chambre* announced that the person who demanded admittance was the keeper of the seals, who had been intrusted with a message to her Majesty from the King, she became convinced that her fears had not deceived her. This apprehension was, however, dispelled by the address of the envoy, who merely informed the Queen that her royal consort desired to make known to her, that for certain reasons of state, he found himself compelled to leave his mother at Compiègne under the guard of the Maréchal d'Estrées; that he begged her instantly to rise; to abstain from again seeing the ex-Regent; and to join him without loss of time at the Capuchin convent, whither he had already proceeded, and where he should await her coming.

"Anne of Austria, although alike distressed and amazed by this intelligence, made no comment upon so extraordinary a communication; but after having briefly expressed her readiness to obey the command of the King, she left her bed; and while doing so, dispatched the Marquise de Seneçay, her lady of honour, to tell the unfortunate Marie de Medicis that she was anxious to see her, as she had an affair of importance to reveal; while for certain reasons she could not

venture to her apartment until she had herself sent to request her to do so. The Queen-mother, who knew nothing of the resolution which had been taken, but who was in hourly apprehension of a renewal of her former sufferings, did not lose a moment in profiting by the suggestion; and Anne of Austria had no sooner received the expected summons than she threw on a dressing-gown and hurried to the chamber of her royal relative, whom she found seated in her bed, and clasping her knees with her hands in a state of bewildered agitation. On the entrance of her daughter-in-law, the unhappy Princess exclaimed in a tone of anguish:

"'Ah! my daughter, I am then to die or be made a prisoner. Is the King about to leave me here? What does he intend to do with me?'

"Anne of Austria, bathed in tears, could only reply by throwing herself into the arms of the helpless victim; and for a while they wept together in silence.

"The wife of Louis had, however, little time to spend in wordless sympathy, and ere long she communicated to Marie de Medicis the cruel resolution of the King, and conjured her to bear her banishment with patience until they should be revenged upon their common enemy, the Cardinal. They then parted with mutual expressions of sympathy and affection; and, as it ultimately proved, they never met again."*

* Motteville, Mém., vol. i, pp. 375–377.

During the course of this brief and melancholy interview, the young Queen, with the assistance of her royal mother-in-law, completed her toilette; and then after their hurried leave-taking hastened to rejoin the King, who had already evinced great impatience at her delay. But however consoled she might have been by her own escape on this occasion, Anne of Austria was nevertheless condemned to suffer her share of humiliation, for she had no sooner reached the convent than Louis formally presented to her Madame de la Flotte as her first lady of honour, and her grand-daughter Mademoiselle de Hautefort as her next attendant; while upon her expressing her astonishment at such an arrangement, she was informed that the Countess du Fargis, who was replaced by Madame de la Flotte, had been banished from the court, and that other great ladies had shared the same fate.*

The will of Richelieu had indeed proved omnipotent. Not one of those whom he had doomed to disgrace was suffered to escape, without submitting to humiliations degrading to their rank. The unfortunate Princess de Conti, the sister of the Duke de Guise, whose only crime was her attachment to her royal mistress, and her love for Bassompierre, was exiled to Eu; where her separation from the Queen, and the imprisonment of the maréchal so preyed upon her mind that she died within two months of a broken heart; while all was alarm and

* Capefigue. vol. v, pp. 35—37. Brienne, vol. ii, pp. 25, 26.

consternation in the capital, where the greatest and the proudest in the land trembled alike for their lives and for their liberties.

Of all the victims of the Cardinal the Queen-mother was however the most wretched and the most hopeless. So soon as Anne of Austria had quitted her apartment, feeling herself overcome by the suddenness of the shock to which she had been subjected, she caused her physician M. Vautier to be summoned, and was abruptly informed that he had been arrested, and conveyed a prisoner to Senlis.

"Another!" she murmured pitiously; "Another in whom I might have found help and comfort. But all who love me are condemned; and Richelieu triumphs! My history is written in tears and blood. Heaven grant me patience, for I am indeed an uncrowned Queen, and a childless mother."

Her lamentations were interrupted by the announcement of the Maréchal d'Estrées, who having been admitted, communicated to her the will of the King that she should await his further orders at Compiègne.

"Say rather, M. le Maréchal;" she exclaimed with a burst of her habitual impetuosity; "that I am henceforth a prisoner, and that you have been promoted to the proud office of a woman's gaoler. What are the next commands which I am to be called on to obey? What is to be my ultimate fate? Speak boldly. There is some new misfortune in reserve, but I shall not

shrink. While others suffer for me, I shall find courage to suffer for myself."

"His Majesty, Madam, will doubtlessly inform you—" commenced the mortified noble.

"So be it then, M. le Maréchal;" said Marie haughtily, as she motioned him to retire; "I will await the orders of the King."

Those orders were not long delayed, for on the ensuing morning the Count de Brienne presented to the imprisoned Princess an autograph letter from Louis XIII., of which the following were the contents:

"I left Compiègne, Madam, without taking leave of you in order to avoid the annoyance of making a personal request which might have caused you some displeasure. I desired to entreat you to retire for a time to the fortress of Moulins, which you had yourself selected as your residence after the death of the late King. Conformably to your marriage contract, you would there, Madam and mother, be at perfect liberty; both yourself and your household. Your absence causes me sincere regret, but the welfare of my kingdom compels me to separate myself from you.

"LOUIS."*

As M. de Brienne had received orders to hold no intercourse with the royal captive save in the presence

* Capefigue, vol. v, pp. 37, 38.

of the Maréchal d'Estrées, it was to the latter noble that Marie de Medicis addressed herself when she had read the cold and heartless letter of her son.

"So, Sir;" she exclaimed vehemently; "the King commands me to remove to Moulins! How have I been so unfortunate as to incur his displeasure without having done anything to excite it? Why am I deprived of my physician and the gentlemen of my household? If the King desire to shorten my days he has only to keep me in captivity. It is strange that being the mother of the sovereign I am subjected to the will of his servants; but God will grant me justice. These are not the wishes of my son, but I am the victim of the hatred and persecution of the Cardinal. I know;" she pursued, weeping bitterly; "why I am sent to Moulins; it is because it would be easy from that city to compel my departure for Italy; but rest assured, Maréchal d'Estrées, that *I will sooner be dragged naked from my bed,* than give my consent to such a measure."

"Madam;" interposed the Count de Brienne; "had there been any intention to treat you with disrespect, it could have been done with as much facility at Compiègne as at Moulins. I entreat of your Majesty to reflect before you give us your final answer."

Marie profited by this advice; and the result of her deliberations was a determination to make a final effort towards a reconciliation with the King. In the letter which she addressed to him she declared that it was her most anxious desire to merit his favour, and to conform

to his wishes. She besought him to remember that she was his mother; to recal all the exertions which she had made for the welfare and preservation of his kingdom; and finally she urged him to disregard the counsels of the Cardinal-minister in so far as they affected herself, since she knew, from personal experience, that where he once hated he never forgave, and that his ambition and his ingratitude were alike boundless.*

The only effect produced by this appeal was an offer to change her place of exile to Angers, should she prefer a residence in that city to Moulins; and in either case to confer upon her the government of whichever of those two provinces she might select. The proposal was indignantly rejected. It was evident that the sole aim of Richelieu was to remove her to a distance from the capital which might impede her communication with the few friends who remained faithful to her; and the anxiety of the Cardinal to effect his object only rendered the Queen-mother the more resolute not to yield.†

Meanwhile, the position of the Maréchal d'Estrées and M. de Brienne was onerous in the extreme. They had received stringent commands to treat their royal captive with every demonstration of respect and deference, while at the same time they were instructed to prevent her correspondence with the Duke d'Orleans, who had already reached Besançon in Franche-Comté on his way to the duchy of Lorraine, pursued by the royal

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 388, 389.

† Brienne, vol. ii. pp.86—22,

troops, but nevertheless persisting in his purpose. They were, moreover, to use every argument to induce her consent to leave Compiègne for Moulins; a proposition that never failed to excite her anger, which it was frequently difficult to appease; and the unfortunate maréchal soon became so weary of the perpetual mortifications to which he was subjected, that he daily wrote to the Cardinal representing the utter impossibility of success. Richelieu, however, would not be discouraged; and he merely replied by the assurance: "I know her well; continue to exert yourself, persist without cessation, and you will at last effect your object."*

Meanwhile the King, by the advice of his minister, declared all the nobles by whom Monsieur was accompanied, guilty of *lèse-majesté;* a sentence which was considered so extreme by the Parliament that when called upon to enregister it on their minutes they ventured to remonstrate. This act of justice, however, so exasperated the Cardinal that he forthwith induced Louis to proceed to the capital, and to summon the members to his presence, with an express order that they should approach the Louvre *on foot.* This offensive command was no sooner obeyed than the keeper of the seals severely reprimanded them for their disloyalty and disobedience; and before time was afforded for a reply, the King demanded that the official register should be delivered up to him, which was no sooner done than he passionately tore out the leaf upon which the decree had

* Capefigue, vol. v, p. 40.

been inscribed, and substituted that of his own council, by which the court of Parliament was forbidden all deliberation on declarations of state, at the risk of the suspension of its counsellors, and even of greater penalties, should such be deemed advisable.*

This proceeding so much incensed the Duke d'Orleans that he in his turn forwarded a declaration to the Parliament, in which he affirmed that he had quitted the kingdom in consequence of the persecution of the Cardinal de Richelieu, whom he accused of an attempt upon his own life, and upon that of the Queen-mother; which was, as he affirmed, to have been succeeded by a third against the sovereign, in order that the minister might ultimately make himself master of the state; and Monsieur had scarcely taken this step when Marie de Medicis adopted the same policy. The Parliament had in past times warmly seconded her interests; and she still hoped that it would afford her its protection. In the appeal which she made, she dilated in the first place upon her own wrongs; and complained that, without having in anywise intrigued against either the sovereign or the nation, she was kept a close prisoner at Compiègne; while she, moreover, followed up this representation by accusing Richelieu of all the anarchy which existed in the kingdom, and by demanding to be permitted to appear publicly as his accuser.

The appeal was, however, vain. The Parliament, indignant at the insult which had been offered to them,

* Decrees of the Parliament.

and alarmed at the violence exhibited by Louis in the affair of Monsieur, would not even consent to open her despatch, but sent it with the seal still unbroken to the King;* and thus the unfortunate Princess found herself compelled to abandon a hope by which she had hitherto been sustained. She then sought to interest the people in her favour; and for this purpose she did not scruple to exaggerate the sufferings to which she was subjected by a captivity which she represented as infinitely more rigorous than it was in fact.

Her example was imitated alike by the Duke d'Orleans and the Cardinal-minister; and ere long the whole nation was deluged with pamphlets, in which each accused the other without measure or decency. Richelieu was, throughout his whole career, partial to this species of warfare, and had able writers constantly in his employ for the express purpose of writing down his enemies when he could not compass their ruin by more speedy means; but on this occasion the violence of Monsieur was so great that the Cardinal began to apprehend the issue of the struggle, and deemed it expedient to terminate all further open aggression against Marie de Medicis. In consequence of this conviction, therefore, he forwarded an order to the Maréchal d'Estrées to withdraw from Compiègne with the troops under his command, and to leave the Queen-mother at perfect liberty, provided she were willing to pledge

* Jean le Clerc. Vie du Cardinal-Duc de Richelieu. Cologne, 1695, vol. ii, pp. 7, 8.

herself to remain in that city, until she should receive the royal permission to select another residence.

It is probable that when the minister exacted this promise he was as little prepared for its observance as was Marie when she conceded it; for she had no sooner become convinced that her star had waned before that of Richelieu, than she determined to effect her escape so soon as she should have secured a place of refuge, whence she could, should she see fit to do so, retire to the Spanish Low Countries, and throw herself upon the protection of the Archduchess Isabella. Having once arrived at this decision, the Queen-mother resolved, if possible, to seek an asylum at La Capelle, which being a frontier town, offered all the necessary facilities for her project; and for this purpose she dispatched a trusty messenger to Madame de Vardes, whose husband was governor of the place during the temporary absence of his father, and who was herself an ancient mistress of Henry IV., and the mother of the Count de Moret. Flattered by the confidence reposed in her, Madame de Vardes lost no time in exerting her influence over the ambitious spirit of her husband, whom the Duke d'Orleans promised to recompense by the rank of gentleman of honour to the Princess to whom he was about to be united; and ere long M. de Vardes, who saw before him a career of greatness and favour should the faction of Monsieur finally triumph, suffered himself to be seduced from his duty to the King, and consented to deliver up the city which had been confided to his

keeping, to the Queen-mother and her adherents. This important object achieved, Marie, who was aware that should the royal troops march upon La Capelle it would be impossible to withstand their attack, hastened to entreat the help of the Archduchess in case of need, and also her permission to retire to the Low Countries should the persecution of the Cardinal ultimately compel her to fly from France.

The rapid successes of the King of Sweden in Germany, and the extraordinary strength of the States-General in the United Provinces, had greatly alarmed both the Emperor and the King of Spain; who were consequently well pleased to encourage any internal agitation which might so fully tend to occupy the attention of Louis as to prevent him from rendering effective aid either to Gustavus, the United Provinces, or the Protestant princes of Germany, nearly the whole of whom were in arms against the Emperor; and thus the request of Marie was eagerly welcomed alike by Ferdinand, Philip, and Isabella, who pledged themselves to assist her to the full extent of their power. The court of Brussels especially made her the most unqualified promises; and the Archduchess, while assuring her that on her arrival she should be received with all the honour due to her distinguished rank, was profuse in her expressions of sympathy.

Thus, as we have shown, when Richelieu demanded and received the promise of Marie de Medicis, that she would not seek to leave Compiègne, she was only

awaiting a favourable opportunity to effect her escape, and this was afforded by the evacuation of the garrison. Fearful, however, that this new order might only be a snare laid for her by the Cardinal, and aware that although the troops had left the city, they were still quartered in the environs, she affected to discredit the assurance of the maréchal that thenceforth he exercised no control over her movements.

"I am not to be thus duped, Monsieur;" was her cold reply; "your men are not far off; and I believe myself to be so thoroughly a prisoner that henceforward I shall never leave the castle; even my walks shall be restricted to the terrace."

When this determination on the part of his mother was communicated to the King, he hastened to inform her that the troops should be withdrawn to a distance from Compiègne; and to entreat, that in consideration of her health, she would occasionally take the exercise by which alone it could be preserved.

To this request she replied that she should obey his pleasure in all things; and having thus, as she believed, removed all suspicion of her purpose, she only awaited the conclusion of the necessary preparations to carry it into execution.

On the 18th of July, at ten o'clock at night, the widow of Henry IV., attended only by Madame du Fargis, who had secretly reached Compiègne in order to bear her company during her flight, and by M. la Mazure the lieutenant of her guard, ascended

a carriage which had been prepared for her, rapidly crossed the ferry, and took the road to La Capelle; but before she could reach her destined haven, she was met by M. de Vardes, who with every demonstration of regret, informed her that her design having by some extraordinary chance been suspected by Richelieu, the marquis his father, who was devoted to the minister, had been hurriedly ordered to return to La Capelle, where he had arrived on the previous evening; had shown himself to the garrison and magistrates; and had commanded his son to leave the town upon the instant.

Agitated as she was, the Queen-mother did not fail even at that moment, and, as some historians state, most justly, to suspect that she had been betrayed either by the fears or the venality of the very individual before her; but hastily offering her acknowledgments for his timely warning, she repressed her resentment, and gave instant directions to her attendants to proceed with all speed to Avesnes in Hainault. So well was she obeyed that on the first day of her journey she travelled a distance of twenty leagues, disregarding the entreaties of Madame du Fargis, who represented to her the necessity of some temporary repose; and persisting in her purpose so resolutely that on the 20th of July, she reached her destination, and placed herself beyond the reach of her pursuers; who had, however, so languidly performed their duty that it was openly declared that they had rather been dispatched by Richelieu to drive her from the kingdom than to compel her to remain within it.

On her arrival at Avesnes the royal fugitive was received with all imaginable honour by the Marquis de Crevecœur, the governor of the fortress; the troops were under arms; and she was escorted by the dignitaries of the city to the Hôtel-de-Ville, where she took up her temporary residence. The Baron de Guépé was instantly dispatched to Brussels to announce her arrival to the Archduchess; and the Prince d'Epinoy, the governor of the county, waited upon her Majesty, to entreat that she would remove to Mons, where Isabella was preparing to welcome her. During her sojourn at Avesnes, Marie dispatched three letters to Paris, in which she respectively informed the King, the Parliament, and the municipality, of her reasons for leaving the country.

"Perceiving," she wrote in that which she addressed to her son; "that my health was failing from day to day, and that it was the Cardinal's intention to cause me to die between four walls, I considered that in order to save my life and my reputation, I ought to accept the offer which was made to me by the Marquis de Vardes, to receive me in La Capelle, a town of which he is the governor, and where you possess absolute power. I therefore determined to go there. When I was within three leagues of La Capelle the Marquis de Vardes informed me that I could not enter that place, because he had given it into the hands of his father. I leave you to imagine what was my affliction when I saw myself so deceived, and pursued by a body of cavalry

in order to hasten me more speedily out of your kingdom. God has granted that the artifices of the Cardinal were discovered. The very individuals who negociated the affair have confessed that it was a plot of the Cardinal's, in order to compel me to leave the country; an extreme measure which I dreaded above all things, and which he passionately desired."*

In reply to this letter Louis XIII. wrote thus: "You will allow me, if you please, Madam, to say, that the act which you have just committed, together with what has occurred for some time past, clearly discovers to me the nature of your intentions, and that which I may in future expect from them. The respect which I bear towards you prevents me from being more explicit."†

The other letters of the Queen-mother, although calculated to excite upon their publication a general hatred of the Cardinal, availed her personal cause as little as that which she had addressed to the monarch. Her flight was blamed by all classes throughout the country; and not the slightest movement was made in her favour either by the Parliament or the people. Richelieu was triumphant. He had at length succeeded in throwing suspicion upon her movements, and in compelling her to share the odium which he had hitherto borne alone; and although she saw herself the

* Le Vassor, vol. vi, pp. 735—741. Mercure Français, 1631. Siri, vol. vii, pp. 332—336. Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 392. Sismondi, vol. xxv, pp. 165, 166.

†. Le Vassor, vol. vi, pp. 735, 736.

honoured guest of the princes with whom she had taken refuge, the unfortunate Marie de Medicis soon became bitterly conscious that she had lost her former hold on the affections of that France over which she had once so proudly ruled. It is true that with the populace the ill-fated Princess yet retained her popularity, but she owed a great portion of this still-lingering affection to the general aversion of the masses towards the Cardinal; and while they mourned and even wept over her wrongs, they made no effort to enforce her justification.

On the invitation of the Prince d'Epinoy, Marie de Medicis, after a short sojourn at Avesnes, proceeded to Mons, where she was welcomed with salvos of artillery, and found all the citizens under arms in honour of her arrival; and it was in the midst of the rejoicing consequent upon her entry into that city, that she received the cold and stern reply of Louis, of which we have quoted a portion above, and to which she hastened to respond by a second letter, wherein she bitterly complained of the harshness with which she had been treated; and refused to return to France until the Cardinal should have been put upon his trial for "his crimes and projects against the state." The letter thus concludes: "I am your subject and your mother; do me justice as a King, love me as a son. I entreat this of you with clasped hands."

The reception of the self-exiled Queen by the admirable Isabella, whose noble and generous qualities have been extolled by all the contemporaneous historians,

was as warm and as sincere as though she had welcomed a sister. The two princesses wept together over the trials and sufferings of the ill-fated Marie; nor was the sympathy of the Archduchess confined to mere words. Every attention which the most fastidious delicacy could suggest was paid to the wants and wishes of the royal fugitive; and after a few days spent in the most perfect harmony in the capital of Hainault, the court removed to the summer palace of Marimont, whence they ultimately proceeded to Brussels; where the French queen made her entry with great pomp, and was enthusiastically received by all classes of the population.

From Brussels the illustrious ladies visited Antwerp, on the occasion of the annual *kermesse*, or fair, where the inhabitants vied with each other in doing honour to their distinguished guests. Six thousand citizens, magnificently apparelled, were under arms during their stay; and from the galleries of the quaint and picturesque old houses hung draperies of damask, tapestry, and velvet, which blended their rich tints with those of the banners that waved above the summits of the public buildings, and from the masts of the shipping in the harbour.

Little could the unfortunate Marie de Medicis anticipate, when she thus saw herself surrounded by the most unequivocal exhibition of respect and deference ever displayed towards greatness in misfortune, that she should only a few short years subsequently enter

the city in which she was now feasted and flattered, a penniless wanderer, only to be driven out in terror and sickness, to seek a new shelter, and to die in abjectness and despair!

Ever sanguine, the Queen-mother even yet hoped for a propitious change of fortune. She would not believe that Richelieu could ultimately triumph over the natural affection of a son, evil as her experience had hitherto proved; and when Isabella, in order to comply with the necessary observances of courtesy, wrote to assure Louis XIII. that so far from intending any disrespect towards himself by the reception which she had given to his mother, she begged him rather to regard it as a demonstration of her deference for himself; and at the same time offered to assist by every means in her power in effecting a reconciliation between them, Marie de Medicis deceived herself into the belief that such a proposition, coming from such a source, would never be rejected; while it is probable that had Louis been left to follow the promptings of his own nature, which was rather weak than wicked, her anticipations might at this period have been realised; but the inevitable Richelieu was constantly beside him, to insinuate the foulest suspicions, and to keep alive his easily-excited distrust of the motives of the Queen-mother.

The despatches of Isabella were, moreover, intrusted to the Abbé Carondelet, deacon of the cathedral of Cambray, who, as the Cardinal was well aware, consi-

dered himself aggrieved by the refusal to which he had been subjected on his application for the bishopric of Namur; and who would in consequence, as he did not fail to infer, be readily prevailed upon to abandon the interests of the fugitive Queen. The event proved the justice of his previsions. Carondelet was not proof against the extraordinary honours which he received at the French court, nor the splendid presents of the King and his minister; and the man to whose zeal and eloquence Isabella had confidingly intrusted the cause of her royal guest was, at the lapse of a few short days, heart and soul the creature of Richelieu.*

The Cardinal found little difficulty in persuading the monarch that Marie de Medicis must have had a full and perfect understanding with the Spanish cabinet before she would have ventured to seek an asylum within their territories; an assertion which was so faintly combated by the treacherous envoy of the Archduchess, that thenceforward the protestations of the Queen-mother were totally disregarded, and the triumph of Richelieu was complete. In consequence of this conviction, Louis XIII. published, in the month of August, a declaration which was most injurious alike towards Marie de Medicis and Gaston d'Orleans. Among other accusations, it asserted that "the evil counsellors of his brother had driven him, contrary to the duty imposed by his birth, and the respect which

* Le Vassor, vol. vi, pp. 759—764.

he owed to the person of his sovereign, to address to him letters full of calumnies and impostures against the government; that he had accused, against all truth and reason, his very dear and beloved cousin the Cardinal de Richelieu of infidelity and enterprise against the person of his Majesty, that of the Queen-mother, and his own; that for some time past the Queen-mother had also suffered herself to be guided by bad advice; and that on his having entreated of her to assist him by her counsels as she had formerly done, she had replied that she was weary of public business; by which he had discovered that she was resolved to second the designs of the Duke d'Orleans, and had consequently determined to separate from her, and to request her to remove to Moulins, to which she had refused to accede; that having subsequently left Compiègne, she had taken refuge with the Spaniards, and was unceasingly disseminating documents tending to the subversion of the royal authority and of the kingdom itself; that for all these reasons, confirming his previous declations, he declared guilty of *lèse-majesté* and disturbers of the public peace, all those who should be proved to have aided the Queen-mother and the Duke d'Orleans in resisting his authority, and of having induced them to leave the kingdom; as well as those who had followed and still remained with them; and that it was his will that proceedings should be taken against them by the seizure of their property, and the abolition of all their public offices, appointments, and revenues."

By this arbitrary act not only were the adherents of Marie de Medicis and Gaston d'Orleans deprived of their property, but their own revenues were confiscated to the crown, and they at once found themselves without pecuniary resources.* The calculations of Richelieu had been able, for the faction of the fugitives was instantly weakened by so unanticipated an act of severity. Crippled in means, they could no longer recompense the devotion of those individuals who had followed their fortunes, many of whom had done so from a hope of future aggrandisement, and who immediately retired without even an attempt at apology, in order to secure themselves from ruin. When the unfortunate Queen would have sacrificed her jewels to liquidate the claims which pressed the most heavily upon her, she found the measure impossible, lest the King should redemand them as the property of the crown and she consequently soon saw herself reduced to the undignified alternative of subsisting upon the generosity of the powers from whom she had sought protection.

While Louis was, to use the words of Mezeray, thus "dishonouring his mother and his brother," and depriving them of the very means of subsistence, he was overwhelming the Cardinal de Richelieu alike with honours and with riches. The estate whence he derived his name was erected into a duchy-peerage, and he was thenceforward distinguished by the title of the

* Le Clerc, vol. ii, p. 11.

Cardinal-Duke; while the government of Brittany having become vacant by the death of the Maréchal de Thémines, it was also conferred upon the omnipotent minister.*

At this period, indeed, it appeared as if Richelieu had overcome all obstacles to his personal greatness; and although the crown of France was worn by the son of Henry IV., the foot of the Cardinal was on the neck of the nation. That he was envied and hated is most true, but he was still more feared than either. No one could dispute his genius; while all alike uttered "curses not loud but deep" upon his tyranny and ambition.

The King had long become a mere puppet in his hands; leaving all state affairs to his guidance, while he himself passed his time in hunting, polishing muskets, writing military memoirs, or wandering from one palace to another in search of amusement. Perpetually surrounded by favourites, he valued them only as they contributed to his selfish gratification, and abandoned them without expostulation so soon as they incurred the displeasure of the Cardinal, to whom in his turn he clung from a sense of helplessness rather than from any real feeling of regard.

Bitterly, indeed, had Marie de Medicis deluded herself when she imagined that anything was to be hoped from the affection of Louis XIII., who was utterly inca-

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 392—395. Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 9—12.

pable of such a sentiment; but who, in all the relations of life, whether as son, as husband, as friend, or as sovereign, was ever the slave of his own egotism, and influenced by his own self-love.

On her arrival at Brussels, the Queen-mother had dispatched M. la Mazure to inform the Duke d'Orleans of her flight from France, and of the gracious reception which she had met from the Archduchess Isabella; assuring him at the same time that having been apprised of his intention to espouse the Princess Marguerite, she not only gave her free consent to the alliance, but was of opinion that it should be completed without delay.

The Oratorian Chanteloupe,* in whom she reposed the most unlimited confidence, had followed Monsieur to Lorraine, and was empowered to declare in her name to the Duke Charles that the contemplated marriage met with her entire approval, upon certain conditions which were immediately accepted, although it was considered expedient to defer their execution until Gaston should, with the aid of his ally, have placed himself at the head of a powerful army, which was to march upon the French frontier in order to compel the King to withdraw his opposition.

The marriage-portion of the Princess had been fixed at a hundred thousand pistoles, the greater portion of which sum was expended in levying troops for the proposed campaign; and in less than six weeks an army of

* Chanteloupe was the confessor, adviser, and secret agent of Marie de Medicis.

ten or twelve thousand foot-soldiers and five thousand horse was raised; while Gaston, full of the most extravagant hopes, prepared to commence his expedition.

Meanwhile commissaries had been appointed by Richelieu to proceed with the trial of the adherents of the Queen-mother and the Duke d'Orleans, and the first victims of his virulence were two physicians and astrologers accused of having, at the request of the royal exiles, drawn the horoscope of the King, and predicted the period of his death. These unfortunate men were condemned to the galleys for life. The Duke de Roannés, the Marquis de la Vieuville, and the Countess du Fargis were executed in effigy; while the property of the Count de Moret, the countess his mother, the Dukes de Roannés, Elbœuf, and Bellegarde, the Marquises of Boissy, la Vieuville, and Sourdeac, and the President le Coigneux, was confiscated to the crown.

The government of Picardy was transferred from the Duke d'Elbœuf to the Duke de Chevreuse, and that of Burgundy from the Duke de Bellegarde to the Prince de Condé; and thus the faction of the malcontents found itself crippled alike in pecuniary resources and in moral power.

Towards the close of the year, intelligence of the designs of the Duke d'Orleans having reached Paris, the King proceeded to Lorraine, in order to arrest his movements; and dispatched a messenger to Charles, demanding to be informed of his motive for raising so

strong an army; and also if it were true that Monsieur contemplated a marriage with the Princess Marguerite, as he had been informed. In reply, the Lorraine prince assured the royal envoy that the troops had been levied with a view to assist the Emperor against the King of Sweden; and that the rumour which had spread in the French capital of an intended alliance between his august guest and the Princess his sister, was altogether erroneous. No credence was, however, vouchsafed to this explanation, the Cardinal already possessing sufficient evidence to the contrary; and being, moreover, quite as anxious to deprive the Emperor of all extraneous help as he was to circumvent the projects of Monsieur. A second express was consequently forwarded a few days subsequently, summoning Charles of Lorraine immediately to march his army beyond the Rhine; and threatening in the event of his disobedience that the King would forthwith attend the nuptials of his brother at the head of the best troops in his kingdom.

This intimation sufficed to convince the Lorraine prince that his only safety was to be found in compliance, all the hopes which Gaston had indulged of succour from France having failed him; and it was accordingly resolved that the little army should proceed at once to Germany under the command of Charles himself. Montsigot, the private secretary of Monsieur, was at that period at Brussels, whither he had been sent to inform the Queen-mother and the Archduchess

Isabella of the progress of affairs in Lorraine, and to solicit assistance in the projected irruption into France which had been concerted with the Spanish cabinet. His application proved successful, and on different occasions the Prince received from the sovereigns of the Low Countries upwards of five hundred thousand florins. The threat of the King, however, rendered a change of measures imperative, Puylaurens,* one of the favourites of the Prince, was dispatched in all haste to acquaint the court of Brussels with the failure of the contemplated campaign; and to concert measures for a similar attempt during the ensuing year, with the ministers of Philip and Isabella; as well as to secure a retreat for Monsieur in Flanders, should he find himself compelled to quit the duchy of Lorraine.†

At the same time Marie de Medicis dispatched the Chevalier de Valençay to Madrid, with orders to

* Antoine de l'Âge, Seigneur de Puylaurens, had possessed himself of the entire confidence of Gaston d'Orleans; who, like his royal mother and brother, was always the tool of his favourites; and his influence over the weak and vacillating Prince at length became all-powerful, although it was exercised more than once to the prejudice of his confiding master. Puylaurens was elevated to the peerage after having in some degree sold his patron to Richelieu, who in 1634 bestowed upon him, from policy, the hand of his cousin Mademoiselle de Pont-Château; but by whom he was immediately imprisoned, the Cardinal having long indulged a hatred towards his person which he had determined to gratify. Puylaurens died in captivity in the following year.

† Le Vassor, vol. vii, pp. 17—22.

explain to Philip of Spain the precise nature of her position, and to solicit his interference in her behalf; but after long deliberation the Spanish ministers induced his Majesty not to compromise himself with France by affording any direct assistance to the Queen-mother; and to excuse himself upon the plea of the numerous wars in which he was engaged, especially that against the Dutch which had been fomented by the French cabinet, and which had for some time cruelly harassed his kingdom. He, however, assured the royal exile of his deep sympathy, and of his intention to urge upon the Infanta Isabella the expediency of alleviating to the utmost extent of her power the sufferings of her august guest.

Philip and his cabinet could afford to be lavish of their words, but they did not dare to brave the French cannon on the Pyrenees.*

At the close of the year Charles of Lorraine led back his decimated army from Germany; and the marriage of Gaston with the Princess Marguerite shortly afterwards took place. There was, however, nothing regal in the ceremony, the presence of Louis XIII. at Metz rendering the contracting parties apprehensive that should their intention transpire, they would be troubled by a host of unwelcome guests. Thus the Cardinal of Lorraine, Bishop of Toul, and brother to the reigning Duke, dispensed with the publi-

* Capefigue, vol. v, pp. 121—129.

cation of the bans, and permitted the ceremony to take place in one of the convents of Nancy, where a monk of Cisteaux performed the service at seven o'clock in the evening; the only witnesses being the Duke de Vaudemont, the father of the bride, the Abbess of Remiremont by whom she had been brought up, Madame de la Neuvillette her governess, and the Count de Moret.*

It is asserted that the old Duke de Vaudemont was so apprehensive of the unhappy results of a marriage contracted under such circumstances, that on receiving the congratulations of those around him, he replied calmly: "Should my daughter not be one day eligible to become Queen of France, she will at least make a fitting Abbess of Remiremont." †

While Gaston d'Orleans was engrossed by his personal affairs, his unhappy mother was engaged in making a fresh appeal to the justice and affection of the King. Powerless and penniless in a foreign land, she pined for a reconciliation with her son, and a return to her adopted country. But the hatred and jealousy of Richelieu were still unappeased. He had already robbed her of her revenues; caused an inventory of her furniture, pictures, and equipages to be made, as though she were already dead; imprisoned or banished the members of her household; and had bribed the pens of a number of

* Gaston d'Orleans, Mém., p, 123.

† Le Vassor, vol. vii, p. 25.

miserable hirelings to deluge France with libellous pamphlets to her dishonour. There was no indignity to which she had not been subjected through his influence; and on this last occasion she was fated to discover that even the poor gratification of justifying herself to her son and sovereign was to be henceforth denied to her; as at the instigation of the Cardinal, instead of vouchsafing any reply to the long and affecting letter which she had addressed to him, Louis coldly informed the bearer of the despatch that should the Queen again permit herself to write disparagingly of his prime-minister, he would arrest and imprison her messenger.

A short time subsequently, having learnt that the King had once more offended the Parliament, Marie de Medicis, who had received information that Richelieu was desirous to declare war against Spain, and who was naturally anxious to prevent hostilities between her son and the husband of her daughter, resolved once more to forward a letter to the Parliament, and to entreat of them to remonstrate with the King against so lamentable a design. Yielding to a natural impulse she bitterly inveighed in her despatch against the Cardinal-Duke, who, in order to further his own aggrandisement was about, should he succeed, to plunge the nation into bloodshed, and to sever the dearest ties of kindred. This letter was communicated to Richelieu, whose exasperation exceeded all bounds; and it is consequently

almost needless to add that it only served to embitter the position of the persecuted exile.

On the 26th of December Charles of Lorraine, anxious to appease the anger of the French king, proceeded to Metz, where he was well received by Richelieu, who trusted, through his influence, to secure the neutrality of the Duke of Bavaria. He, however, warned the Prince that Louis would never consent to the marriage of Monsieur with the Princess Marguerite, nor permit him to make his duchy a place of refuge for the French malcontents; and, finally, despite the banquets and festivals which were celebrated in his honour, Charles became convinced that unless he complied with the conditions of a treaty which was proposed to him, he would not be allowed to return to his own territories.

Under this well-grounded impression the unfortunate young Prince had no other alternative than to submit to the humiliation inflicted on him, and on the 31st of December he signed a document by which he abjured for the future every alliance save that with France; accorded a free passage to the French armies through his duchy at all times; and pledged himself not to harbour any individuals hostile to Louis, particularly the Queen-mother or Monsieur; and, as a pledge of his promised obedience, he delivered up his fortress of Marsal. Such was the result of his trust in the clemency of the French king and his minister; but, far from having been gained over to their cause, the

Duke of Lorraine returned to Nancy with a deep and abiding indignation at the indignity which had been forced upon him; and an equally firm resolve to break through the compulsatory treaty on the first favourable opportunity.*

* Siri, vol. vii, p. 447. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 182, 183.

CHAPTER IX.

[1632.]

GASTON D'ORLEANS PROCEEDS TO BRUSSELS—HIS RECEPTION—VANITY OF MONSIEUR—EXULTATION OF THE SPANISH CABINET—MONTMORENCY ABANDONS THE INTERESTS OF RICHELIEU—MARIE DE MEDICIS SOLICITS HIS SUPPORT—HE CONSENTS TO SECOND THE PROJECTS OF MONSIEUR—THE QUEEN-MOTHER AND THE DUKE D'ORLEANS SELL THEIR JEWELS IN ORDER TO RAISE TROOPS FOR THE INVASION OF FRANCE—TRIAL OF THE MARÉCHAL DE MARILLAC—MARIE AND GASTON EXERT THEMSELVES TO SAVE HIS LIFE—HE IS EXECUTED—THE ADHERENTS OF THE TWO ROYAL EXILES CREATE DISSENSIONS BETWEEN THE MOTHER AND SON—GASTON JOINS THE SPANISH ARMY—MUNIFICENCE OF ISABELLA—GASTON MARCHES UPON BURGUNDY—REMONSTRANCE OF MONTMORENCY—AN UNDIGESTED CAMPAIGN—BATTLE OF CASTELNAUDERY—SLAUGHTER OF THE REBEL LEADERS—COWARDICE OF MONSIEUR—MONTMORENCY IS MADE PRISONER—GASTON ENDEAVOURS TO MAKE TERMS WITH THE KING—HE ABANDONS THE CAUSE OF HIS MOTHER, AND THAT OF HIS ALLIES—HE STIPULATES FOR THE PARDON OF MONTMORENCY—RICHELIEU REFUSES THE CONDITION—THE TREATY IS SIGNED BY MONSIEUR—JEALOUSY OF LOUIS XIII.—THE MINIATURE—MONTMORENCY IS CONVEYED TO TOULOUSE, AND PUT UPON HIS TRIAL—DOUBLE-DEALING OF THE CARDINAL—OBDURACY OF THE KING—EXECUTION OF MONTMORENCY—DESPAIR OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—DEATH OF THE COUNTESS DU FARGIS—THE JESUIT CHANTELOUPE AND MADAME DE COMBALLET—A NEW CONSPIRACY—THE ARCHDUCHESS ISABELLA REFUSES TO DELIVER UP THE SERVANTS OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—GASTON RETIRES TO BURGUNDY.

CHAPTER IX.

[1632.]

By the treaty of Vic, Charles of Lorraine was, as we have shown, compelled to refuse all further hospitality to his royal brother-in-law; while Gaston found himself necessitated to submit to a separation from his young wife, and to proceed to the Spanish Low Countries, where Isabella had offered him an asylum. The amiable Archduchess nobly redeemed her pledge; and the reception which she accorded to the errant duke was as honourable as that already bestowed upon his mother.

The Marquis de Sainte-Croix, who had recently arrived from Italy to command the Spanish forces in Flanders, was instructed to place himself at the head of all the nobility of the court, and to advance a league beyond the city to meet the French prince; while the municipal bodies of Brussels awaited him at the gates. He was lodged in the state apartments of the palace, and

all the expenses of his somewhat elaborate household were defrayed by his magnificent hostess.

"I am sorry, Sir;" said Isabella gracefully, as Gaston hastened to offer his acknowledgments on his arrival; "that I am compelled to quarrel with you on our first interview. You should have deferred your visit to me until you had seen the Queen your mother."

"Madam;" replied the Prince; "it will be infinitely more easy for me to justify myself for having previously paid my respects to yourself, than to recognise in an efficient manner the debt of obligation which I have incurred towards you."

After the compliments incident to such a meeting had been exchanged between Isabella and her new guest, Gaston received those of the Spanish grandees, and the Knights of the Golden Fleece; and at the close of this ceremony he proceeded to the residence of Marie de Medicis, who embraced him tenderly, and bade him remember that all her hopes of vengeance against Richelieu, and a triumphant return to France, were centred in himself. The vain and shallow nature of the Prince was flattered by the position which he had thus suddenly assumed. Thwarted and humbled at the court of his brother by the intrigues of the Cardinal; distrusted by those who had formerly espoused his cause, and who had suffered the penalty of their misplaced confidence; and impoverished by the evil issue of his previous cabals, he had long writhed beneath his enforced insignificance; whereas he had

now, in his new retreat, suddenly grown into authority, and been the object of general homage; his wishes had become laws, and his very follies met with applause and imitation. The little court of Brussels awoke into sudden animation; and pleasure succeeded pleasure with a rapidity which afforded constant occupation to his frivolous and sensual nature.

His arrival had filled the Spanish cabinet with joy, as they foresaw that the war which he contemplated against his brother promised to weaken the power of the French king, who, while occupied in reducing this new enemy, would for the time be rendered unable to continue the powerful aid which he had hitherto afforded to the opponents of the house of Austria; a circumstance whence their own prospects in Flanders could not fail to profit largely.

The project of this contemplated war was based upon two principles: in the first place, on the help promised by Philip of Spain himself; and in the second, upon the pledge given by the Duke de Montmorency* to embrace

* Henry II., Duke de Montmorency, Governor of Languedoc, &c., was the son of Henry I., Duke de Montmorency, Constable of France. He was born on the 30th of April, 1595, and was created Admiral of France when only eighteen years of age. His personal advantages, combined with his high moral qualities and singular accomplishments, secured to him great and deserved popularity. After having rendered the most brilliant services to his country, he was induced to espouse the cause of Gaston d'Orleans, and having imprudently exposed himself at the battle of Castelnaudery, he was made prisoner; put upon his

the cause of Monsieur, and to receive him in Languedoc, of which province he was the governor, and which afforded immense facilities for carrying out his purpose.

Of the defection of the Duke de Montmorency from his interests, Richelieu, generally so well-informed upon such subjects, did not entertain the most remote suspicion, as during all the factions of the court, Montmorency had hitherto acted as a mediator, and had consequently upon several occasions done good service to the minister; but, proud as he was, alike of his illustrious descent and of his personal reputation, the duke, like all the other nobles about him, still sought to aggrandise himself. The descendant of a long line of ancestors who had successively wielded the sword of Constable of France, he desired, in histurn, to possess it; and disregarding the fact that Richelieu, whose policy led him to oppose all increase of power among the great nobles, had definitively abolished so dangerous a dignity, he suffered himself to be induced, by his representations, to resign the rank which he already held of Admiral of the French fleet, in order that it might prove no impediment to his appointment to the coveted constableship. The result of this imprudence had been that while the Cardinal possessed himself of the vacated post under another title, Montmorency found that he had resigned the substance to grasp a

trial for high treason at the instigation of the Cardinal de Richelieu, and executed at Toulouse on the 30th of October, 1632.

shadow; as, on his application for the sword so long wielded by the heads of his family, he was met by an assurance that thenceforward no such function would be recognised at the court of France. The mortified noble then applied for the post of marshal-general of the King's camps and armies, which, save in name, would not have differed from the rank to which he had previously aspired; and again he was subjected to a resolute refusal. Indignant at the rejection of his claim, the duke had, at the close of the preceding year, retired to his government of Languedoc; and his anger against the court was heightened by a third repulse which he experienced when soliciting the government of the city and fortress of Montpellier.

The irritation which he felt under this complicated disappointment, combined with the consciousness that he had been duped by the Cardinal, and compelled to act as the subordinate of an individual so inferior to himself in rank, created a disgust which, carefully as he endeavoured to conceal it, soon became evident to those about him; nor was it long ere Marie de Medicis and Monsieur were informed of his disaffection. Confidential messengers were immediately dispatched to invite the duke to espouse their cause, and they found a powerful ally in the duchess, Maria Felicia d'Ursini, who was a near relative of the Queen-mother.

Weary of inaction, anxious for revenge, and, perhaps, desirous to emulate the generous example of the Duke

d'Epernon, who had previously declared himself the champion of Marie, Montmorency was at length prevailed upon to consent to their solicitations, and even to pledge himself to receive Gaston in Languedoc; although at the same time he urged him not to quit Brussels until the end of August, in order that he might have time to complete the necessary preparations.

The prospect of possessing so powerful an ally strengthened the hopes of the royal exiles; and immediately upon the arrival of Monsieur in the Low Countries, the mother and son began to concert measures for the success of their difficult and dangerous undertaking. The first impediment which they were called upon to surmount was their total inability to defray the expenses of a powerful army, and to secure the necessary funds for maintaining a secret intelligence with their French adherents. The munificence of Isabella supplied all their personal wants, but even her truly regal profusion could not be expected to extend beyond this point; and it was ultimately agreed that both parties should forward at all risks their jewels by a trusty messenger to Amsterdam for sale.

This had scarcely been accomplished when intelligence reached the Archducal court of the trial of the Maréchal de Marillac, ostensibly for peculation, but, as the Queen-mother and her son were only too well aware, simply for his adherence to their own cause. In vain did they protest against so iniquitous a measure; in vain did

they entreat the interference of their friends in his behalf, and even menace his judges with their personal vengeance, individually and collectively, should they be induced to pronounce his condemnation; Richelieu in his plenitude of present power overruled all their efforts; and the unfortunate marshal, who had incurred the hatred of the Cardinal from his favour with Marie de Medicis, was sentenced to lose his head by the majority of a single voice, and was executed on the following day; while his unhappy brother expired a short time subsequently in the fortress of Pontoise.*

Meanwhile the court of Brussels became a scene of dissension and violence. The favourites of the Queen-mother and those of the Duke d'Orleans were engaged in constant struggles for supremacy; the Duke de Bellegarde and the President Le Coigneux had refused to accompany Monsieur. who was consequently entirely under the influence of Puylaurens, with whom he passed his nights in the most sensual and degrading pleasures; while Marie de Medicis, under the direction of her constant companion and confidant Chanteloupe, spent her time in devotional duties, and in dictating to the hired writers by whom she had surrounded herself, either pamphlets against the Cardinal, or petitions to the Parliament of Paris.

Alarmed by the execution of Marillac, Monsieur,

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 401—405. Capefigue, vol. v, pp. 90—105. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 188—190. Le Vassor, vol. vii, pp. 192—217.

however, roused himself from his trance of dissipation; and disregarding the entreaty of the Duke de Montmorency, resolved to join the army which Gonzalez de Cordova, the Spanish ambassador, was concentrating at Trèves, at the instigation of Charles of Lorraine, who was anxious to delay the threatened invasion of his own duchy by the French troops.

On the 18th of May Gaston d'Orleans accordingly took leave of the court of Brussels; when the Infanta, not satisfied with having during the space of four months defrayed all the outlay of his household, accompanied her parting compliments with the most costly and munificent gifts, not only to the Prince himself, but also to every nobleman and officer in his service. About the neck of Monsieur she threw a brilliant chain of carbuncles and emeralds, from which was suspended a miniature portrait of the King of Spain. Numerous chests of wearing apparel, linen, and other requisites for the forthcoming campaign, swelled his slender baggage to a thoroughly regal extent; while her treasurer was instructed to deliver into his hands the sum of one hundred thousand *patagons*,* with which to defray the expenses of the journey.†

Having passed a fortnight at Trèves, and received the troops promised by Philip of Spain, the Prince resolved at once to prosecute his intention of entering France; a resolution which was earnestly combated by Montmo-

* A Spanish coin, equal in value to a French crown.

† Gaston d'Orleans, Mém., p. 131. Capefigue, vol. v, p. 129.

rency, who represented that he was yèt unprovided with the necessary funds for the maintenance of the troops, and with the means of defence essential to the success of the enterprise. Urged, however, as we have stated, by the Duke of Lorraine, and presuming upon the *prestige* of his name, Gaston refused to listen to this remonstrance; and after having traversed the territories of his brother-in-law, he hurriedly pursued his march through Burgundy at the head of his slender body of Spanish cavalry. Contrary, however, to his expectations, he was not joined by a single reinforcement upon the way, although his position as heir-presumptive to the crown secured him from any demonstration of resistance. Langres and Dijon closed their gates against him, the magistrates excusing themselves upon the plea that they held those cities for the King; and on his arrival in the Bourbonnais, after devastating all the villages upon his route, the imprudent Prince was met by a request from M. de Montmorency that he would march his troops through some other province, as no sufficient preparations had yet been completed for his security in Languedoc. Once embarked in his rash attempt, however, Gaston disdained to comply with this suggestion; and pursued his way towards the government of the duke, closely followed by ten thousand men, who had been dispatched against him by Richelieu, under the command of the Maréchal de la Force.

Our limits will not permit us to do more than glance at the progress of this rash and undigested campaign,

which, in its result, cost some of the best and noblest blood in France. Suffice it that the Cardinal, alarmed by the rapidity with which Monsieur advanced towards Languedoc, and rendered still more apprehensive by the defection of the Marshal-Duke de Montmorency, lost no time in inducing the sovereign to place himself at the head of his army, in order to intimidate the rebels by his presence; while, on the other hand, the States of Languedoc had been induced through the persuasions of their governor, to enregister (on the 22nd of July) a resolution by which they invited the Duke d'Orleans to enter their province, and to afford to them his protection; they pledging themselves to supply him with money, and to continue faithful to his interests.*

Montmorency, on his side, had received from Spain a promise that he should be forthwith reinforced by six thousand men, and a considerable amount of treasure for the payment of the troops; but Philip and his ministers, satisfied with having kindled the embers of intestine war in the rival kingdom, suddenly abated in their zeal; no troops were furnished, and the whole extent of their pecuniary aid did not exceed the sum of fifty thousand crowns, which did not, moreover, reach their destination until the struggle was decided.

Thus Montmorency found himself crippled on all sides; and when the rashness of Gaston had directed the march of the royal army upon Languedoc, he was in

* Siri, vol. vii, p. 552.

no position to make head against them. Nevertheless, the brave spirit of the duke revolted at the idea of submission, and he accordingly prepared to protect himself as best he might by the seizure of a few fortresses; and, finally, he received Monsieur at Lunel, on the 30th of July. Their combined forces amounted only to two thousand foot-soldiers, three thousand horse, and a number of volunteers, together with three pieces of ordnance; while, being totally destitute of funds, there could remain but little doubt as to the issue of the expedition.

One faint hope of success, however, still animated the insurgents. The King, although upon his march, had not yet joined the little army of the Maréchal de Schomberg, which consisted only of a thousand infantry and twelve hundred horse, while he was totally destitute of artillery; and Montmorency at once perceived that hostilities must be commenced before the junction of the royal forces could take place. Schomberg had taken up his position near Castelnaudery, in order of battle, on the 1st of September; and, acting upon the conviction we have named, Montmorency determined on an attack, which, should it prove successful, could not fail to be of essential service to the interests of Monsieur. It was accordingly resolved that the maréchal-duke should assume the command of the van-guard, while Gaston placed himself at the head of the main body. Montmorency was accompanied by the Counts de Moret, de Rieux, and de la Feuillade, who, after some slight skirmishes, abandoning the comparatively safe position

which they occupied, recklessly pushed forward to support a forlorn hope which had received orders to take possession of an advantageous post. M. de Moret, whose impetuosity always carried him into the heart of the *mêlée*, was the first to charge the royal cavalry, among whom he created a panic which threw them into the utmost disorder; and this circumstance was no sooner ascertained by Montmorency than, abdicating his duties as a general, he dashed forward at the head of a small party to second the efforts of his friend. The error was a fatal one, however, for he had scarcely cut his way through the discomfited horsemen when some companies of Schomberg's infantry, who had been placed in ambush in the ditches, suddenly rose and fired a volley with such precision upon the rebel troop, that Moret, de Rieux, and la Feuillade, together with a number of inferior officers, were killed upon the spot; while Montmorency himself fell to the ground covered with wounds, his horse having been shot under him. And meanwhile Gaston looked on, without making one effort to avenge the fate of those who had fallen in his cause; and he no sooner became convinced that his best generals were lost to him, than, abandoning the wounded to the tender mercies of the enemy, he retreated from the scene fo action without striking a blow.*

As, faint from loss of blood, Montmorency lay crushed beneath the weight of his heavy armour, he gasped out: "Montmorency! I am dying; I ask only for

* Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 58—60.

a confessor." His cries having attracted the attention of M. de St. Preüil, a captain of the guards, who endeavoured to extricate him, he murmured, as he drew an enamelled ring from his finger: "Take this, young man, and deliver it to the Duchess de Montmorency." He then fainted from exhaustion, and his captors hastened to relieve him of his cuirass and his cape of buff leather, which was pierced all over by musket balls. While they were thus engaged, the Marquis de Brézé,* who had been informed of his capture, hastened to the spot, and, taking his hand, bade him be of good cheer; after which he caused him to be placed upon a ladder covered with cloaks and straw, and thus conveyed him to Castelnaudery.†

The retreat of Gaston from this ill-fated field was accomplished in the greatest disorder; on every side whole troops of his cavalry were to be seen galloping madly along without order or combination; and it was consequently evident to Schomberg that nothing could prevent Monsieur and the whole of his staff from falling into his hands, should he see fit to make them prisoners. The maréchal possessed too much tact, however, to make such an attempt; as in the one case he must incur the everlasting enmity of the heir-presumptive to the crown; or, in the other, Gaston, roused by a feeling of self-preservation, might attempt to renew the conflict,

* Urbain de Maillé, Marquis de Brézé, the brother-in-law of the Cardinal de Richelieu.

† Capefigue, vol. v, p. 142.

and finally retrieve the fortunes of the day. By the fall of Montmorency, moreover, sufficient had been accomplished to annihilate the faction of Monsieur; and thus the royal general offered no impediment to the retreat of the Prince, whom he permitted to retire in safety to Beziers with the remnant of his army.*

The subsequent bearing of Gaston d'Orléans was worthy of his conduct at Castelnaudery; as, only three days after the battle, he suffered himself to be persuaded that his best policy would be to throw himself upon the clemency of the King. His infantry disbanded themselves in disgust; and he was compelled to pawn his plate in order to defray the arrears of his foreign allies; while the province of Languedoc, which regarded him as the destroyer of its idolised governor, returned to its allegiance, and refused to recognise his authority.

Yet, notwithstanding these circumstances, there was a romance and an interest attached to the position of the Prince, combating and struggling as he assumed to be, not merely for a recognition of his own rights but also for those of a widowed and outraged mother, which, had he proved himself worthy of his exalted station, must have insured to him the regard and co-operation of a brave and generous nation; but Gaston d'Orleans had been weighed in the balance, and had been found wanting in all the attributes of his rank and birth, and a deep disgust had replaced among the people the enthusiasm which his misfortunes had pre-

* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 411.

viously excited. He sacrificed his friends without a pang, save in so far as their fall involved his own success; he was ever as ready to submit as he had been to revolt when his personal interests demanded the concession; and thus, satisfied that in every case he was wholly governed by a principle of self-preservation, all save those whose individual fortunes were hinged upon his own, fell from him without hesitation and without remorse.

Convinced that by the capture of the Duke de Montmorency he was rendered powerless, the weak and selfish Prince, as we have said, sought only to protect himself from the effects of his revolt; and, accordingly, when he became aware that he could no longer contend, he expressed an earnest desire to effect a reconciliation with his royal brother; although, still infatuated by vanity, he proposed conditions as exaggerated as though his position enabled him to enforce them in the event of their rejection. It was, however, an easy task for the negociators to convince him that he misappreciated his power; and to induce him in a few days to make concessions as dishonourable as they were humiliating. Not only did he consent to discontinue all commerce with the courts of Spain and Lorraine, but also to forsake the interests of the unhappy Queen-mother, who had fondly hoped to find in him a protector and an avenger; and to abandon to the justice of the King all those of his adherents who had incurred the royal displeasure, with the sole exception of his personal household; in whose joint

names M. de Puylaurens pledged himself to reveal "all the particulars of such of their past transactions as might prove injurious to the state, or to the interests of the sovereign, and those who had the honour to be in his service."

Even Richelieu himself could demand no more; and, accordingly, upon these degrading terms, Monsieur received a written assurance from the King that thenceforward he would receive him once more into favour, re-establish him in his possessions, and permit him to reside upon that one of his estates which should be selected by the royal pleasure, together with the members of his household who were included in the amnesty.

This treaty was signed on the 29th of September; and the residence assigned to Gaston was Champigny, a château which had originally belonged to the ducal family of Montpensier.

Justice must, however, be rendered to the Duke d'Orleans in so far that before he could be induced to put his hand to this degrading document he made a vigorous effort to effect the pardon of the Maréchal de Montmorency; but the attempt was frustrated by Richelieu, who, feeling that the Prince was in the toils, would admit of no such concession.

The agents of the Cardinal were instructed to assure Monsieur that he had no hope of escape for himself save in an entire submission to the will of the sovereign; and this argument proved, as he was aware that it would do, all powerful with the individual to whom it was

addressed; while he was moreover assured that his own pertinacity upon this point could only tend to injure the interests of Montmorency, which might be safely confided to the clemency of his royal master; and that his personal submission and obedience must exercise the most favourable influence upon the fortunes of both.

Easily persuaded where his own interests were involved, Gaston accordingly ceased to desist, and the young and gallant duke was abandoned to the vengeance of the Cardinal. Louis XIII. was at Lyons when he received intelligence of the defeat of Monsieur; and he was no sooner assured that the rebels had not taken a single prisoner, than he determined to make an example of every leader who had espoused their cause, whom he might encounter on his journey. Ere he reached his destination three noble heads fell by the hand of the executioner; but still his vengeance was not sated; nor did the exalted rank and brilliant reputation of Montmorency serve for an instant to turn him from his purpose. Private animosity closed all the avenues of mercy; and the indiscretion of one meddling spirit sealed the death-warrant of the gallant prisoner. It is asserted that when he was captured Montmorency wore upon his arm a costly diamond bracelet, containing the portrait of Anne of Austria, which having been perceived by Bellièvre, the commissary of Schomberg's army, who was greatly attached to the noble captive, he affected, in order to conceal the circumstance from less friendly eyes, to consider it expedient to subject the

prisoner to a judicial interrogatory, preparatory to his trial; and when he had seated himself beside him, ostensibly for this purpose, he succeeded with some difficulty in wrenching the miniature from its setting; but, notwithstanding all his precaution, the desired object was not accomplished without exciting the attention of some individual who hastened to apprise the Cardinal of what he had discovered, who at once communicated the fact to Louis, embittering his intelligence by comments which did not fail to arouse the indignation of the King, and to revive his jealousy of his wife, while they tended at the same time to increase his exasperation against the rebel duke.*

From Lectoure, Montmorency, still suffering cruelly from his wounds, was removed to Toulouse, and reached the gates at the very moment when the bells of the city were ringing a joyous peal in honour of the arrival of the King, who had hastened thither in order to counteract by his presence any efforts which might be made by his judges to save his life. The duke had been escorted throughout his journey by eight troops of cavalry well armed, his great popularity in the province having rendered the Cardinal apprehensive that an attempt would be made to effect his rescue; and while the glittering train of the sovereign were pouring into the streets amid the flourish of trumpets and the acclamations of the populace, the unfortunate prisoner was conveyed to the Hôtel-de-Ville, where he was confined

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 415, 416.

in a small chamber on the summit of the belfry-tower; "so that," says a quaint old historian, "the ravens came about him to sport in the stone-grass. A hundred of the Swiss guards were on duty near his person night and day to prevent his holding any communication with the *capitouls*,* the citizens, and the public companies of the great city of Toulouse."†

Immediate preparations were made for the trial of the illustrious captive; Richelieu, who could ill brook delay when he sought to rid himself of an enemy, having prevailed upon the King to summon a Parliament upon the spot, instead of referring the case to the Parliament of Paris by whom it should fitly have been tried. Nor was this the only precaution adopted by the vindictive Cardinal, who also succeeded in inducing Louis to name the members of the court, which was presided by Châteauneuf the keeper of the seals, who had commenced his career as a page of the Connétable de Montmorency, the father of the prisoner.

As the marshal-duke had been taken in arms against the sovereign, and frankly avowed his crime, his fate was soon decided. He was declared guilty of high-treason, and condemned to lose his head, his property to be confiscated, and his estates to be divested of their prerogative of peerage.

Not only during his trial, however, but even after

* Principal magistrates of Toulouse.

† Histoire véritable de tout ce qui s'est fait et passé en la ville de Tholoze, en la mort de M. de Montmorency, 1632.

his sentence had been pronounced, the most persevering efforts were made by all his friends to obtain its revocation. But Louis, as one of his historians has aptly remarked, was never so thoroughly a King as when he was called upon to punish;* a fact of which Richelieu was so well aware that he did not hesitate to affect the deepest commiseration for the unhappy duke, and even to urge some of the principal nobles of the court to intercede in his behalf.

The Princess de Condé — to win whose love Henry IV. had been about to provoke an European war—deceived by the treacherous policy of the Cardinal, threw herself at his feet to implore him to exert his influence over the monarch, and to induce him to spare the life of her beloved brother; but Richelieu, instead of responding to this appeal, in his turn cast himself on his knees beside her, and mingled his tears with hers, protesting his utter inability to appease the anger of his royal master.†

The Duke d'Epernon, who, notwithstanding his affection for Montmorency, had declined to join the faction of Monsieur, despite his age and infirmities, also hastened to Toulouse, and in the name of all the relatives and friends of the criminal, implored his pardon as a boon. Nothing, however, could shake the inflexible nature of Louis, and although he did not attempt to interrupt the appeal of the duke further

* Sismondi, vol. xxiii, p. 212.

† Siri, vol. vii. p, 565.

than to command him to rise from his kneeling posture, it was immediately evident to all about him, from his downcast eyes, and the firm compression of his lips, that there was no hope for the culprit.

The resolute silence of the King ere long impressed M. d'Epernon with the same conviction; and, accordingly, having waited a few moments for a reply which was not vouchsafed, he requested the royal permission to leave the city.

"You are at liberty to do so at your pleasure, M. le Duc;" said Louis coldly; "and I grant your request the more readily as I shall shortly follow your example."

Nor were the citizens less eager to obtain the release of their beloved duke; and the house in which the King had taken up his temporary residence was besieged by anxious crowds who rent the air with cries of "Mercy! Mercy! Pardon! Pardon!" On one occasion their clamour became so loud that Louis angrily demanded the meaning of so unseemly an uproar; when the individual to whom he had addressed himself ventured to reply that what he heard was a general appeal to his clemency, and that should his Majesty be induced to approach the window, he would perhaps take pity upon the people.

"Sir;" replied Louis haughtily; "were I to be governed by the inclinations of my people, I should cease to be a King!"*.

* Pontis, Mém., vol. ii, p. 37.

From any other sovereign than Louis XIII. a revocation of the sentence just pronounced against one so universally beloved as Montmorency might well have been anticipated, but the son of Henry IV. was inaccessible to mercy where his private feelings were involved; and not only did he resist the entreaties and remonstrances by which he was surrounded, but he even refused to suffer the Duchess de Montmorency, the Princess de Condé, and the Duke d'Angoulême—the wife, sister, and brother-in-law of the prisoner—to approach him. He was weary of the contest, and eager for the termination of the tragic drama in which he played so unenviable a part.

While all was lamentation and despair about him, and the several churches were thronged with persons offering up prayers for the reservation of the condemned noble, the King coldly issued his orders for the execution; only conceding, as a special favour, that it should take place in the court of the Hôtel-de-Ville, and that the hands of the prisoner should not be tied.*

Thus, on the 30th of October, the very day of his trial, perished Henri de Montmorency, who died as he had lived, worthy of the great name which had been bequeathed to him by a long line of ancestry, and mourned by all classes in the kingdom.

The unfortunate Marie de Medicis, who received con-

* Le Vassor, vol. vii, p. 216.

stant intelligence of the movements of the rebel army, had wept bitter tears over the reverses of her errant son; but she had no sooner ascertained that by the treaty of Beziers, he had pledged himself to abandon her interests, than her grief was absorbed by indignation; and she complained vehemently of the treachery to which she had been subjected. With her usual amiability, the Archduchess Isabella sought by every means in her power to tranquillise her mind, representing with some reason that the apparent want of affection and respect exhibited by Gaston on that occasion had probably been forced upon him by the danger of his own position; and entreating that she would at least suffer the Prince to justify himself before she condemned him for an act to which he was in all probability compelled by circumstances. But the iron had entered into the mother's heart, and the death of the Countess du Fargis, which shortly afterwards took place, added another pang to those which she had already endured.

The beautiful lady of honour had never been seen to smile since she was made acquainted with the fact of her mock trial and her execution in effigy in one of the public thoroughfares of Paris. The disgrace which, as she believed, would thenceforward attach to her name, not only wounded her sense of womanly dignity, but also broke her heart; and a rapid consumption deprived the unhappy Queen-mother of one of the most devoted of her friends.

It can scarcely be matter of surprise that, rendered desperate by her accumulated disappointments and misfortunes, Marie de Medicis at this moment welcomed with avidity the suggestions of Chanteloupe, who urged her to revenge upon the Cardinal the daily and hourly mortifications to which she was exposed. At first she listened listlessly to his counsels, for she was utterly discouraged; but ere long, as he unfolded his project, she awoke from her lethargy of sorrow, and entered with renewed vigour into the plan of vengeance which he had concerted. Whether it were that she hoped to save the life of Montmorency, of whose capture she had been informed, or that she trusted to effect her own return to France by placing herself in a position to make conditions with Richelieu, it is at least certain that she did not hesitate to subscribe to his views, and to lend herself to the extraordinary plot of the reverend Oratorian.

"Your Majesty is aware;" said Chanteloupe; "that Monsieur has not dared to avow his marriage with the Princess Marguerite; and I have sure information that the minister, who endeavoured to effect an union between his favourite niece and the Cardinal de Lorraine without success, has now the audacity to lift his eyes to your own august son. The Queen is childless, and Richelieu aspires to nothing less than a crown for the Comballet."

"*Per Dio!*" exclaimed Marie, trembling with indignation.

"The lady is at present residing in the Petit Luxem-

bourg;" pursued the monk calmly; "in the very hôtel given by your Majesty to his Eminence during the period when he possessed your favour—"

"Given!" echoed the Queen-mother vehemently. "Yes, given as you say; but on condition that whenever I sought to reclaim it, I was at liberty to do so on the payment of thirty thousand livres; and have you never heard what was the result of this donation? When he proved unworthy of my confidence I demanded the restoration of the hôtel upon the terms of the contract; but when the document was delivered into my hands, I discovered that for livres he had substituted crowns, and that in lieu of 'whenever she shall desire it,' he had inserted 'when the King shall desire it.' I remonstrated against this treachery, but I remonstrated in vain; Louis pronounced against me, and the Cardinal established his wanton niece in my desecrated mansion, where she has held a court more brilliant than that of the mother of her sovereign. Nay," continued the Queen, with increasing agitation; "the lingering atmosphere of royalty which yet clings to the old halls has so increased the greatness of the low-born relative of Jean Armand du-Plessis, that she has deemed it necessary to destroy one of the walls of my own palace to enlarge the limits of that which she inhabits."*

"It were well," said Chanteloupe, with a meaning smile; "to prove to the lady that it is possible to exist

* Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 83, 84.

in a more narrow lodging. The King is absent from Paris. The Luxembourg is thinly peopled; and the Comballet would serve admirably as a hostage."

"*Veramente, mio padre;*" exclaimed Marie de Medicis, bounding upon her seat; "the thing is well imagined, and cannot fail to do us good service. Richelieu loves his niece—too well, if we are to credit the scandal-mongers of the court — and with the Comballet in our hands we may dictate whatever terms we will. To work, *padre*, to work; there is little time to lose."

Such was the plot to which the Queen-mother imprudently accorded her consent; and for a time everything appeared to promise success. The nephew of Chanteloupe, and a confidential valet of Marie herself, were intrusted with the secret, and instructed to make the necessary arrangements. Relays were prepared between Paris and Brussels, and nine or ten individuals were engaged to assist in the undertaking. Carefully, however, as these had been selected, two of their number, alarmed by the probable consequences of detection, had no sooner arrived in the French capital than they revealed the plot, and the whole of the conspirators were committed to the Bastille, while information of the intended abduction was immediately forwarded to the King. Irritated by such an attempt, Louis commanded that they should instantly be put upon their trial; and at the same time he wrote with his own hand to congratulate Madame de Comballet on her

escape, and to assure her that had she been conveyed to the Low Countries, he would have gone to reclaim her at the head of fifty thousand men. In return for this condescension the niece of Richelieu entreated the King to pardon the culprits; a request with which he complied the more readily as the names of several nobles of the court were involved in the attempt, as well as that of the Queen-mother.*

The Cardinal, however, proved less forgiving than the destined victim of this ill-advised and undignified conspiracy. Enraged against Marie de Medicis, and anxious to make her feel the weight of his vengeance, he found little difficulty in inducing Louis to request Isabella to deliver up to him Chanteloupe and the Abbé de St. Germain;† but the Archduchess excused herself, declaring that as the two ecclesiastics in question were members of the Queen-mother's household, she could not consent to be guilty of an act of discourtesy towards her Majesty by which she should violate the duties of hospitality; and the only immediate result of the notable plot of the reverend Oratorian was the increased enmity of Richelieu towards his former benefactress.

Monsieur had no sooner ascertained the fate of

* Le Vassor, vol. vii, pp. 412, 413. Siri, vol. vii, p. 575. Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 82—84.

† The Abbé de St. Germain was the author of a multitude of satirical pamphlets, powerfully written, and directed against the administration of Richelieu.

Montmorency, whose life he had been privately assured would be spared in the event of his acknowledging his fault, than he at once felt that should he remain longer in France, not only his own safety might be compromised, but that he must also sacrifice the confidence of his few remaining adherents; as no one would be rash enough to brave the vengeance of the minister in his cause, should he not openly testify his indignation at so signal an offence. A rumour, moreover, reached him that several of the officers of his household were to be withdrawn from his service; and Puylaurens soon succeeded in convincing him that should he not leave the kingdom, he must be satisfied to live thenceforward in complete subjection to Richelieu; who, when he should ultimately ascertain the fact of his marriage with the Princess Marguerite, would not fail to have it dissolved.

Already predisposed to the measure, the Prince yielded at once to the arguments of his favourite, and secretly left Tours on the 6th of November, accompanied only by fifteen or twenty of his friends. On his way to Burgundy, at Montereau-Faut-Yonne, he wrote a long letter to the King, declaring that should his Majesty feel any displeasure at his thus leaving the country, he must attribute his having done so to his indignation against those who had caused him to take the life of the Duke de Montmorency, to save which he would willingly have smothered his just resentment, and sacrificed all his personal interests. He also complained bitterly that he

had received a pledge to that effect, which had been violated; and declared that he had been assured in the name of the King that should he march towards Roussillon it would seal the fate of the duke, from which declaration he had inferred that by obeying the will of his Majesty he should insure his safety; whereas, after having condescended to the most degrading proofs of submission, no regard had been shown to his feelings, and no respect paid to his honour. Finally, he announced his intention of seeking a safe retreat in a foreign country, alleging that from the treatment to which he had been subjected in France, he had every reason to dread the consequences of the insignificance into which he had fallen in his own.

In reply to this communication Louis coldly observed: "The conditions which I accorded to you are so far removed from your pretensions, that their perusal alone will serve as an answer to what you have advanced. I will not reply to your statement that the prospect which was held out to you of his life caused you to submit to those terms. Every one was aware of your position; had you another alternative?"*

Had Gaston been other than he was, the King would have been spared the question; for it is certain that had Monsieur only possessed sufficient courage to make the

* Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 212, 213. Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 84—86. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 417, 418. Le Vasssor, vol. vii, pp. 421—427. Siri, vol. vii, p. 578. Capefigue, vol. v, pp. 195—201.

attempt, nothing could have prevented him after his retreat from Castelnaudery from retiring into Roussillon; but to the very close of his life, the faction-loving Prince always withdrew after the first check, and sought to secure his own safety, rather than to justify the expectations which his high-sounding professions were so well calculated to create.

CHAPTER X.

[1633.]

MONSIEUR RETURNS TO FLANDERS — THE QUEEN-MOTHER RETIRES IN DISPLEASURE TO MALINES — INFLUENCE OF CHANTELOUPE — SELFISHNESS OF MONSIEUR — DEATH OF GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS — RICHELIEU SEEKS TO WITHDRAW THE QUEEN-MOTHER AND HER SON FROM THE PROTECTION OF SPAIN — MARIE IS URGED TO RETIRE TO FLORENCE — THE TUSCAN ENVOY — TWO DIPLOMATISTS — MORTIFICATION OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER — SHE DESIRES TO SEEK AN ASYLUM IN ENGLAND — CHARLES I. HESITATES TO GRANT HER REQUEST — HELPLESS POSITION OF MARIE DE MEDICIS — THE IRON RULE OF RICHELIEU — THE CARDINAL-DRAMATIST — GASTON AVOWS HIS MARRIAGE TO THE KING — LOUIS ENTERS LORRAINE, AND TAKES NANCY — MADAME ESCAPES TO THE LOW COUNTRIES — HER RECEPTION AT THE COURT OF BRUSSELS — MARIE DE MEDICIS TAKES UP HER RESIDENCE AT GHENT — SERIOUS INDISPOSITION OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER — SHE SOLICITS THE ATTENDANCE OF HER PHYSICIAN VAUTIER, AND IS REFUSED — HYPOCRISY OF THE CARDINAL — INDIGNATION OF THE DYING QUEEN — SHE REJECTS THE TERMS OF RECONCILIATION OFFERED BY THE KING — ATTACHMENT OF HER ADHERENTS — RICHELIEU NEGOCIATES THE RETURN OF GASTON TO FRANCE — THE FAVOURITE OF MONSIEUR — GASTON REFUSES TO ANNUL HIS MARRIAGE — ALFESTON IS BROKEN ON THE WHEEL FOR ATTEMPTING THE LIFE OF THE CARDINAL — THE QUEEN-MOTHER IS ACCUSED OF INSTIGATING THE MURDER — THE BODY-GUARD OF THE CARDINAL-MINISTER IS INCREASED — ESTRANGEMENT OF MONSIEUR AND HIS MOTHER — MADAME ENDEAVOURS TO EFFECT THE DISMISSAL OF PUYLAURENS — INSOLENCE OF THE FAVOURITE — HEARTLESSNESS OF MONSIEUR — MARIE SOLICITS PERMISSION TO RETURN TO FRANCE — SHE IS COMMANDED AS A CONDITION TO ABANDON HER FOLLOWERS, AND REFUSES — DEATH OF THE ARCHDUCHESS ISABELLA — GASTON NEGOCIATES, AND CONSENTS TO THE MOST HUMILIATING CONCESSIONS.

CHAPTER X.

[1633.]

After having forwarded his manifesto to the King, Gaston d'Orleans proceeded without further delay to the Low Countries, and once more arrived in Brussels at the close of January, 1633, where he was received by the Spaniards (who had borne all the expenses of his campaign, whence they had not derived the slightest advantage,) with as warm a welcome as though he had realised all their hopes. The principal nobles of the court and the great officers of the Infanta's household were commanded to show towards him the same respect and deference as towards herself; he was reinstated in the gorgeous apartments which he had formerly occupied; and the monthly sum of thirty thousand florins was assigned for the maintenance of his little court.* One mortification, however, awaited him on his arrival; as the Queen-mother, unable to suppress her indignation

* Gaston d'Orleans, Mém., p. 148.

at his abandonment of her interests, had, on the pretext of requiring change of air, quitted Brussels on the previous day, and retired to Malines, whither he hastened to follow her. But, although Marie consented to receive him, and even expressed her satisfaction on seeing him once more beyond the power of his enemies, the wound caused by his selfishness was not yet closed; and she peremptorily refused to accompany him back to the capital, or to change her intention of thenceforth residing at Ghent. In vain did Monsieur represent that he was compelled to make every concession in order to escape the malice of the Cardinal, and to secure an opportunity of rejoining her in Flanders; whenever the softened manner of the Queen-mother betrayed any symptom of relenting, a word or a gesture from Chanteloupe sufficed to render her brow once more rigid, and her accents cold.

As the unhappy exile had formerly been ruled by Richelieu, so was she now governed by the Oratorian, whose jealousy of Puylaurens led him to deprecate the prospect of a reconciliation between the mother and son which must, by uniting them in one common interest, involve himself in a perpetual struggle with the favourite of the Prince. The monk affected to treat the haughty *parvenu* as an inferior; while Puylaurens, who had refused to acknowledge the supremacy of individuals of far higher rank than the reverend father, on his side exhibited a similar feeling; and meanwhile Marie de Medicis and Gaston, equally weak where their favourites

were concerned, made the quarrel a personal one, and by their constant dissensions weakened their own cause, wearied the patience of their hosts, and enabled the Cardinal to counteract all their projects.*

Unable to prevail upon the Queen to rescind her resolution, Monsieur reluctantly returned alone to Brussels, where he was soon wholly absorbed by pleasure and dissipation. All his past trials were forgotten. He evinced no mortification at his defeat, or at the state of pauperism to which it had reduced him; he had no sigh to spare for all the generous blood that had been shed in his service; nor did he mourn over the ruined fortunes by which his own partial impunity had been purchased. It was enough that he was once more surrounded with splendour and adulation; and although he applied to the Emperor, and the sovereigns of Spain and England for their assistance, he betrayed little anxiety as to the result of his appeal.

Meanwhile the unfortunate Queen-mother, who had successively witnessed the failure of all her hopes, was bitterly alive to the reality of her position. She was indebted for sustenance and shelter to the enemies of France; and even while she saw herself the object of respect and deference, as she looked back upon her past greatness and contrasted it with her present state of helplessness and isolation, her heart sank within her, and she dreaded to dwell upon the future.

* Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 86, 87. Le Vassor, vol. vii, pp. 249, 250.

The death of Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, who was killed at the battle of Lutzen at the close of the previous year, had produced a great change in the affairs of Europe; and, fearing that the Austrian cabinet might profit by the event, Richelieu represented to the council the necessity of raising money at whatever cost, and of using every endeavour to effect a continuance of the hostilities in Germany and Flanders, without, however, declaring war against Austria. For this purpose, he stated that more troops must necessarily be raised, but that the forfeited dowry of the Queen-mother and the appanage of the Duke d'Orleans would furnish sufficient funds for their maintenance; an expedient which was at once accepted by the council.*

In the event of either war or peace, however, the Cardinal was equally uneasy to see the mother of the King and the heir-presumptive to the crown in the hands of the Spaniards, as their influence might tend to excite an insurrection on the first check experienced by the French army; while, should a general peace be negociated during their residence in the Low Countries, the Emperor and the King of Spain would not fail to stipulate such conditions for them both, as he was by no means inclined to concede; and he was therefore anxious to effect, if possible, their voluntary departure from the Spanish territories. That he should

* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 418.

succeed as regarded Gaston, Richelieu had little doubt, that weak Prince being completely subjugated by his favourites, who, as the minister was well aware, were at all times ready to sacrifice the interests of their master to their own; but as regarded Marie de Medicis the case was widely different, for he could not conceal from himself that should she entertain the most remote suspicion of his own desire to cause her removal from her present place of refuge, she would remain rooted to the soil, although her heart broke in the effort. Nor was he ignorant that all her counsellors perpetually urged her never to return to France until she could do so without incurring any obligation to himself; and this she could only hope to effect by the assistance of the Emperor and Philip of Spain.

One circumstance, however, seemed to lend itself to his project, and this existed in the fact that the Queen-mother had, during the preceding year, requested her son-in-law the King of England to furnish her with vessels to convey her to a Spanish port; and this request, coupled with her departure from Brussels, led him to believe that she was becoming weary of the Low Countries. He accordingly resolved to ascertain whether there were any hopes of inducing her to retire for a time to Florence; but the difficulty which presented itself was how to renew a proposition which had been already more than once indignantly rejected.

After considerable reflection the Cardinal at length believed that he had discovered a sure method of effect-

ing his object; and with this conviction he one day sent to request the presence of M. de Gondi, the envoy of the Grand-Duke of Tuscany, when after having greatly extolled the prudence of the Grand-Duke throughout the misunderstanding between Louis XIII. and his mother, and made elaborate protestations of the sense which that monarch entertained of his moderation and equity, he conversed for a time on the affairs of Italy, and then as if unpremeditatedly he reverted to the subject of the Queen-mother.

"A-propos;" he said; "speaking of *the poor woman*, certain persons are endeavouring, I understand, to induce her to visit Florence. What do you think of the project?"

"Your Eminence," replied Gondi; "is the first person by whom I have been informed of this intention on the part of her Majesty; I never heard that she had adopted such a resolution."

"Then I must initiate you into the mystery;" pursued Richelieu. "The bad advice of that madman Chanteloupe has been the cause of all the errors of which she has been guilty. The King had requested the Infanta to deliver the man up to him; a demand by which he was so incensed that he forthwith urged the Queen to leave the Low Countries, declaring that she would no longer be safe there, should Isabella, whose health is failing fast, chance to die. The poor woman, listening to this interested counsel, accordingly resolved to go to England, but Charles would not receive her without the consent of her son. Thereupon she solicited

some vessels to convey her to Spain, to which the English monarch replied that he would furnish her with a fleet, provided his brother-in-law approved her intention, and that Philip would consent to her remaining in his dominions. His Catholic Majesty had already given the required pledge, but I am not yet aware of the determination of my own sovereign. You see to what a pitiable state she is reduced; she does not know which way to turn; and I really feel for her. I wish with all my heart that I could help her; but so far from seeing her position in its right light, she continues so headstrong that she feels no regret for the past, and declares that she never shall do so."

M. de Gondi remained silent; and after pausing an instant Richelieu resumed: "As the Queen-mother really wishes to change her place of abode, would to God that she would select some country where the King could prove to her the extent of his affection without endangering the interests of the state; and where nothing might prevent me from testifying towards her my own gratitude and respect. Charles of England cannot well refuse the use of his ships after her request, but I cannot bring myself to believe that she actually desires to reside in Spain. Should she ultimately incline towards Florence, and anticipate a good reception from the Grand-Duke, do you apprehend that she would be disappointed in her hope?"

"Monseigneur;" cautiously replied the envoy, who

was not without a suspicion of the motive which urged the Cardinal to hazard this inquiry, and who had received no instructions upon the subject; "I know nothing of the projects of her Majesty, nor do I believe that the Grand-Duke is better informed than myself. The court of Florence entertains such perfect confidence in the affection of the King of France for his mother, that it leaves all such arrangements to the good-feeling of his Majesty."

"The aspect of affairs has greatly changed within the last few months;" observed Richelieu; "and I am of opinion that the King would be gratified should the Grand-Duke consent to receive his niece, in the event of her desiring to pass a short time under his protection, until a perfect reconciliation is effected between them; but you will see that should she once set foot in England, she will never leave it again, and will by her intrigues inevitably involve us with that country."

Again did M. de Gondi protest his entire ignorance alike of the movements of the exiled Queen and of the wishes of his sovereign, with a calm pertinacity which warned the Cardinal that further persistence would be impolitic, as it could not fail to betray his eagerness to effect the object of which he professed only to discuss the expediency; and, accordingly, the interview terminated without having produced the desired result.*

* Le Vassor, vol. vii, pp. 442—445. Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 92—94. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 422, 423.

Richelieu had, however, said enough to convince the Tuscan envoy that should the Grand-Duke succeed in engaging the Queen-mother to reside at his court, he would gratify both Louis and his minister; but neither he himself nor Marie de Medicis had ever contemplated such an arrangement. It was true, as the Cardinal had stated, that she had applied to Charles of England for shipping, but she had done so with a view of proceeding by Spain to join the Duke d'Orleans in Languedoc, little imagining that his cause would so soon be ruined. Mortified to find herself left for so long a period in a state of dependence upon Philip and Isabella, and deprived of any other alternative, she had next sought to secure an asylum in the adopted country of her daughter, where her near relationship to the Queen gave her a claim to sympathy and kindness which she was aware that she had no right to exact from strangers; and she consequently felt that the obligation which she should there incur would prove less irksome to support than that which was merely based on political interests; and, which, however gracefully conferred, could not be divested of its galling weight.

Henrietta, who had always been strongly attached to her royal mother; and who, in her brilliant exile, pined for the ties of kindred and the renewal of old associations, welcomed the proposal with eagerness; but Charles I., who was apprehensive that by yielding to the wishes of the Queen, he should involve

himself in a misunderstanding with the French court; and who, moreover, disliked and dreaded the restless and intriguing spirit of Marie de Medicis, as much as he deprecated the outlay which her residence in the kingdom must occasion, hesitated to grant her request.

Such was the extremity to which the ingratitude and ambition of a single individual, whose fortunes she had herself founded, had, in the short space of eighteen months, reduced the once-powerful Queen-Regent of France; whose son and sons-in-law were the most powerful sovereigns in Europe.

Since the execution of the Duke de Montmorency, all the nobility of France had bowed the head before the power of Richelieu; the greatest and the proudest alike felt their danger; for they had learnt the terrible truth that neither rank, nor birth, nor personal popularity could shield them from his resentment; and while Louis XIII. hunted at Fontainebleau, feasted at the Louvre, and attended with as much patience as he could assume, the constant representations of the vapid and tedious dramas with which the Cardinal-Duke, who aspired to be esteemed a poet, incessantly taxed the forbearance of the monarch and his court, the active and versatile pen of the minister was at the same time spreading desolation and death on every side. One unfortunate noble, whose only crime had been his adhesion to the cause of Gaston d'Orleans, was condemned to the galleys for life; while the Duke d'Elbœuf, MM. de

Puylaurens, du Coudrai-Montpensier, and Goulas were tried and executed in effigy; the figures by which they were represented being clothed in costly dresses, richly decorated with lace, and glittering with tinsel ornaments.* Other individuals who had taken part in the revolt, but who were also beyond the present power of the Cardinal, were condemned *par contumace*, some to be quartered, and others to lose their heads. The Chevalier de Jars, accused of having endeavoured to assist in the escape of the Queen-mother and Monsieur to England, although no proof could be adduced of the fact, perished upon the scaffold; Châteauneuf, whose assiduities to the Duchess de Chevreuse had aroused the jealousy of the Cardinal, who had long entertained a passion for that lady, was deprived of the seals, which were transferred to M. Seguier;† while Madame de Chevreuse was banished from the court, and the Marquis de Leuville the nephew of Châteauneuf, and several others of his friends were committed to the Bastille.‡

Meanwhile Monsieur had considered it expedient to

* Extrait des Registres du Parlement de Bourgogne, Année 1633. MSS. de la Bibliothèque Royale.

† Pierre Seguier, president *à mortier* of the Parliament of Paris, was born in the year 1504. He was one of the most able magistrates of the sixteenth century, and rendered important services to Henry II. and Charles IX. He was the author of several orations, and a treatise entitled "De Cognitione Dei et Sui." He died in 1580.

‡ Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 423—425.

apprise the King of his marriage with the Princess Marguerite, by which Louis was so greatly incensed that he forthwith resolved to punish the bad-faith of Charles of Lorraine by proceeding to his duchy, and laying siege to the capital. Aware that resistance was impossible, the Prince immediately dispatched his brother the Cardinal to solicit the pardon of the King; but Louis remained inexorable, although the unhappy Charles, who foresaw the ruin of his entire family should the hostile army of France invade his territories, even proposed to abdicate in favour of the Cardinal-Duke Francis. Still Louis continued his onward march; and finally, rendered desperate by his fears, the sovereign of Lorraine consented to deliver up the city upon such terms as his Majesty should see fit to propose, provided that he received no help from without during the next ten days; and, moreover, to place his sister the Princess Marguerite in his hands.

These conditions having been accepted, the Cardinal of Lorraine solicited a passport for himself and his equipage, in order that he might leave Nancy; and his retreat involved so romantic an incident, that it produces the effect of fiction rather than that of sober history. The unfortunate bride of Gaston had no sooner ascertained that she was destined to become the prisoner of the King than she resolved, with a courage which her weak and timid husband would have been unable to emulate, to effect her escape. In a few words she explained her project to the Cardinal Francis, whose

ambition and brotherly love were alike interested in her success; and within an hour she had assumed the attire of one of the pages of his household. Having covered her own hair with a black wig, and stained her face and hands with a dark dye, she hastened to the convent in which she had been married to Monsieur, in order to take leave of the Abbess de Remiremont; and created great alarm among the nuns, who, while engaged in their devotions, suddenly saw an armed man standing in the midst of them; but the Princess had no sooner made herself known than they crowded about her to weep over her trials, and to utter earnest prayers for her preservation.

On reaching the advanced guard of the French army she incurred the greatest danger, as her person was well known to the officer in command; but fortunately for the Princess he had retired to rest, and the carriage which she occupied was searched by a subordinate to whom she was a stranger. After having traversed the royal camp, the courageous fugitive mounted on horseback; and, accompanied by two trusty attendants, rode without once making a halt as far as Thionville, a town which belonged to the Spaniards; but on arriving at the gates she did not venture to enter until she had apprised the Count de Wilthy, the governor, of the step which she had taken; and her fatigue was so excessive that, during the absence of her messenger, she dismounted with considerable difficulty, and flung herself down upon the grass that fringed the ditch; a

circumstance which attracted the attention of the sentinel at the gate, who pointed her out to a comrade, exclaiming at the same time:

"Yon is a stripling who is new to hard work, or I am mistaken."

Meanwhile the errant Princess was faint from exhaustion, and sick with suspense; but she was soon relieved from her apprehensions by the appearance of the governor and his wife, by whom she was welcomed with respect and cordiality; apartments were assigned to her in their own residence; and under their protection she remained for several days at Thionville, in order to recruit her strength, as well as to apprise Monsieur of her approach, and to request an escort to Brussels. Both Gaston and the Queen-mother were overjoyed at her evasion; for although estranged by the jealousies and intrigues of those about them, Marie fully participated in the delight of her son, as she trusted that the presence of a daughter-in-law, who shared her enmity towards the Cardinal, would tend to ameliorate her own position. Carriages and attendants were immediately dispatched to Thionville; while Monsieur proceeded to Namur to meet the Princess, and to conduct her to Brussels, where she was impatiently expected. On alighting at the palace Madame was received into the arms of her mother-in-law, who had returned to the capital in order to congratulate her on the happy result of her enterprise, and was greeted by the Archduchess with equal warmth. The Spanish cabinet accorded an

augmentation of fifteen thousand crowns monthly to the pension of Monsieur for the maintenance of her household, and this liberality was emulated by Isabella, who overwhelmed her with the most costly presents.*

The Duchess d'Orleans had no sooner received the compliments of the court of Brussels than the Queen-mother returned to Ghent, where she was shortly afterwards attacked by so violent a fever that her life was endangered. In this extremity Gaston fulfilled all the duties of an affectionate and anxious son, and urged her to quit the noxious air of the marshes and to return to the capital; but his entreaties were powerless, Chanteloupe on his side advising her to remain in the retreat which she had chosen. Louis XIII. was soon informed of the illness of his mother; and whether it were that he really felt a renewal of tenderness towards her person, or that he merely deemed it expedient to keep up appearances, it is certain that after some time he dispatched two of the physicians of his household to Flanders, with instructions to use their utmost endeavours to overcome the malady of the Queen; while they were moreover accompanied by a gentleman of the court, charged with a cold and brief letter, and authorised not only to express the regrets common on such occasions, but also to make proposals of reconciliation to the royal exiles.

The Infanta, who, despite her age and infirmities, was a frequent visitor in the sick room of her illustrious guest, and who saw with alarm the rapid progress of

* Gaston d'Orleans, Mém., pp. 149—152.

the disease under which the unhappy Marie de Medicis had laboured upwards of forty days, encouraged by the arrival of the French envoy, at length wrote to inform the King that his mother, who placed the greatest confidence in the skill of her own physician Vautier, had expressed the most earnest desire for his attendance; and it is probable that at so extreme a crisis Louis would not have hesitated to comply with her wishes, had not Richelieu opposed his liberation from the Bastille, asserting that Marie de Medicis had induced Isabella to make the request, for the sole purpose of once more having about her person a man who had formerly given her the most pernicious advice, and who encouraged her in her rebellion. All, therefore, that the King would concede under this impression, was his permission to Vautier to prescribe in writing for the royal invalid; but the physician, who trusted that the circumstance might tend to his liberation, excused himself, alleging that as he had not seen the Queen-mother for upwards of two years, he could not judge of the changes which increased age, change of air, and moral suffering, had produced upon her system; and that consequently he dare not venture to propose remedies which might produce a totally opposite result to that which he intended.

But, at the same time that the Cardinal refused to gratify the wishes of the apparently dying Queen, he was profuse in his expressions of respect and affection towards her. "His Majesty is about to dispatch you

to Ghent;" he had said to the envoy when he went to receive his parting instructions. "Assure the Queen-mother from me, that although I am aware my name is odious to her, and conscious of the whole extent of the ill-will which she bears towards me, those circumstances do not prevent my feeling the most profound attachment to her person, and the deepest grief at her indisposition. Do not fail to assure her that I told you this with tears in my eyes. God grant that I may never impute to so good a Princess all the injury which I have suffered from her friends, nor the calumnies which those about her incessantly propagate against me; although it is certain that so long as she listens to these envenomed tongues, I cannot hope that she will be undeceived, nor that she will recognise the uprightness of my intentions."*

It appears marvellous that a man, gifted with surpassing genius, and holding in his hand the destinies of Europe, should condescend to such pitiful and puerile hypocrisy; but throughout the whole of the Memoirs attributed to Richelieu himself, the reader is startled by the mass of petty manœuvres upon which he dilates; as though the dispersion of an insignificant cabal, or the destruction of some obscure individual who had become obnoxious to him, were the most important occupations of his existence.

Not content with insulting his royal victim by words which belied the whole tenour of his conduct, the

* Siri, vol. vii, pp. 685—687. Le Vassor, vol. vii, pp. 1—4.

Cardinal, before he dismissed the envoy, seized the opportunity of adding one more affront to those of which he had already been so lavish, by instructing the royal messenger not to hold the slightest intercourse with any member of her household, and even to turn his back upon them whenever they should address him; a command which he so punctually obeyed that when, in the very chamber of Marie de Medicis, one of her gentlemen offered him the usual courtesies of welcome, he retorted by the most contemptuous silence, to the extreme indignation of the Queen, who, in reply to the message of Richelieu, haughtily exclaimed: "Tell the Cardinal that I prefer his persecution to his civility."

Silenced by this unanswerable assurance, the envoy next proceeded to deliver the despatch with which he had been intrusted by the King. "I am consoled for my sufferings;" said the unhappy mother, as she extended her trembling and withered hand to receive it; "since I am indebted to them for this remembrance on the part of his Majesty. I will on this occasion be careful to return my acknowledgments by a person who will not be displeasing to him."

Such, however, was far from her intention; as, convinced that the insult offered to her attendants had been suggested by the Cardinal, she selected as her messenger the same individual who had formerly delivered to the Parliament of Paris her petition against Richelieu, in order to convince him that should she effect her reconciliation with the monarch on this

occasion, she had no inclination to include his minister in the amnesty. Even past experience, bitter as it was, had not yet taught her that the contest was hopeless.

Her reply to the letter of her son ran thus:

"Monsieur mon fils, I do not doubt that had you been sooner apprised of my illness, you would not have failed to give me proofs of your good disposition. Those which I formerly received have so confirmed this belief, that even my present misfortunes cannot weaken it. I am extremely obliged by your having sent to visit me when the rumour of my indisposition reached you. If your goodness has led you to regret that you were not sooner made acquainted with so public a circumstance, my affection induces me willingly to receive the intelligence which you send me, at any time. Your envoy will inform you that he reached me on the fortieth day of a continuous fever, which augments throughout the night. I was anxious that he should see me out of my bed, in order that he might assure you that the attack was not so violent, and that my strength is not so much exhausted as to deprive me, with God's help, of all hope of recovery. Having been out of health for the last year, and the fever from which I formerly suffered every third week, having changed and become continuous, the physicians apprehend that it may become more dangerous. I am resigned to the will of God, and I shall not regret life, if I am assured of your favour before my death; and

if you love me as much as I love you, and shall always love you."

As regarded the proposals of reconciliation brought by the royal envoy, the best-judging among the friends of the Queen-mother were of opinion that she should accept them; but Chanteloupe earnestly opposed the measure.

"Many of your attendants, Madam," he said coldly; "desire to see you once more in France, even should you be shut up in the fortress of Vincennes. They only seek to enjoy their own property in peace."

The reverend father made no mention of his own enjoyment of a pension of a thousand monthly livres, paid to him by Spain during his residence in the Low Countries, and which must necessarily cease should Marie de Medicis withdraw from the protection of that power.

Before the departure of the King's messenger, he informed the Queen-mother that he was authorised by his sovereign to offer her pecuniary aid should she require it; insinuating at the same time that, in the event of her consenting to dismiss certain of her attendants who were displeasing to the monarch, their misunderstanding might immediately be reconciled.

"I am perfectly satisfied with the liberality of my son-in-law, the King of Spain;" was her brief and cold reply. "He is careful that I shall feel no want."

The Abbé de St. Germain, on ascertaining the terms offered to his royal protectress, earnestly urged her not to reject them. "It is not just, Madam;" he said frankly

and disinterestedly; "that you should suffer for us. When your Majesty is once more established in France, you will find sufficient opportunities of serving us, and of enabling us to reside either here or elsewhere. Extricate yourself, Madam, from your painful situation, and spend the remainder of your life in your adopted country, where you will be independent of the aid of foreigners."

Unhappily for herself, however, Marie de Medicis disregarded this wholesome and generous advice; and although Richelieu, in order to save appearances, from time to time repeated the proposal, she continued to persist in an exile which could only be terminated at his pleasure.*

Having succeeded by this crafty policy in inducing a general impression that the unfortunate Queen persisted from a spirit of obstinacy in remaining out of the kingdom, when she could at any moment return on advantageous conditions, the Cardinal next exerted himself to create a misunderstanding between Marie de Medicis and Monsieur; for which purpose he secretly caused it to be asserted to the Prince and Puylaurens, that the Queen-mother, anxious to effect her own terms to the exclusion of Gaston, had dispatched several messengers to the French court for that purpose. Monsieur affected to discredit the report; but Puylaurens, who was weary of an exile which thwarted his ambition, eagerly welcomed the intelligence, and soon succeeded in inducing Gaston

* Le Vassor, vol. vii, pp. 6—9. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 428, 429. Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 122, 123.

to give it entire credence. Thenceforward all confidence was necessarily at an end between the mother and the son; and the favourite, apprehensive that should Marie de Medicis conclude a treaty with the sovereign before his master had made his own terms, she might, in order to advance her own interests, sacrifice those of the Prince, hastened to dispatch a trusty messenger to ascertain the conditions which Louis was willing to accord to his brother. The reply which Puylaurens received from the Cardinal was most encouraging; Richelieu being anxious that Monsieur should act independently of the Queen-mother, and thus weaken the cause of both parties; while his gratification was increased by the arrival of a second envoy accredited by Gaston himself, who offered in his name, not only to make every concession required of him should he be restored to the favour of the King, but even to allow the minister to decide upon his future place of abode; while Puylaurens, on his side, offered to resign his claim to the hand of the Princess of Phaltzbourg, the sister of the Duke of Lorraine, which had been pledged to him, if he could induce his Eminence to bestow upon him that of one of his own relatives.

In reply to the last proposition the Cardinal declared himself ready to secure to the favourite of Monsieur, should he succeed in making his royal patron fulfil the promises which he had volunteered, a large sum of money, and his elevation to a dukedom; but Puylaurens demanded still better security. He could not forget that

if he still existed, it was simply from the circumstance that the minister had been unable to execute upon his person the violence which had been visited upon his effigy, and he accordingly replied:

"Of what avail is a dukedom, since his Eminence is ever more ready to cut off the head of a peer than that of a citizen?"

"If you are still distrustful;" said the negociator; "the Cardinal moreover offers you an alliance with himself, as you propose; and will give you in marriage the younger daughter of his kinsman the Baron de Pontchateau."

"That alters the case," replied the young noble; "as I am aware that his Eminence has too much regard for his family to behead one of his cousins."*

One impediment, however, presented itself to the completion of this treaty, which proved insurmountable. Monsieur refused to consent to the annullation of his marriage with the Princess Marguerite; while the King, who had just marched an army into Lorraine, and taken the town of Nancy, on his side declined all reconciliation with his brother until he consented to place her in his hands.

On his return from Lorraine Louis XIII. halted for a time at Metz, and during his sojourn in that city an adventurer named Alfeston was put upon his trial, and broken on the wheel, for having attempted to assassinate the Cardinal. The culprit had only a short time pre-

* Capefigue, vol. v, pp. 223, 224.

viously arrived in Metz from Brussels, accompanied by two other individuals who had been members of the body-guard of the Queen-mother, while he himself had actually rode a horse belonging to her stud. As he was stretched upon the hideous instrument of torture, he accused Chanteloupe as an accessory in the contemplated crime; and the Jesuit, together with several others, were cited to appear and defend themselves; while, at the same time, the horse ridden by the principal conspirator was restored to its royal owner, with a request from the King that she would not in future permit such nefarious plots to be organised in her household; as, "not only was the person of the Cardinal infinitely dear to him," but rascals of that description were capable of making other attempts of the same nature; and, not contented with thus insulting his unhappy and exiled mother, Louis, in order to show his anxiety for the safety of the minister, added to the body-guard which had already been conceded to him an additional company of a hundred musketeers, the whole of whom he himself selected.*

The constant indignities to which Marie de Medicis was subjected by Monsieur and his haughty favourite, at length crushed her bruised and wearied spirit. Outraged in every feeling, and disappointed in every hope, she became in her turn anxious to effect a reconciliation with the King, even upon terms less favourable than

* Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 123, 124.

those to which she had hitherto aspired. Gaston seldom entered her apartments, nor was his presence ever the harbinger of anything but discord; while Puylaurens and Chanteloupe openly braved and defied each other, and the two little courts were a scene of constant broil and violence. Monsieur, moreover, forbade his wife to see her royal mother-in-law so frequently, or to evince towards her that degree of respect to which she was entitled both from her exalted rank and her misfortunes. The gentle Marguerite, however, refused to comply with a command which revolted her better nature; and even consented, at the instigation of Marie de Medicis and Isabella—whose dignity and virtue were alike outraged by the dissolute excesses of the favourite—to entreat her husband to dismiss Puylaurens from his service.

"Should you succeed, Madam;" said the Queen-mother; "you will save yourself from ruin. He is sold to the Cardinal; who, in addition to other benefits, has promised to give him his own cousin in marriage. But on what conditions do you imagine that he conceded this demand? Simply that Monsieur should unreservedly comply upon all points, and particularly on that which regards his marriage, with the will of Richelieu; that he should place you in the hands of the King, or leave you here, if it be not possible to convey you to France; that he should authorise an inquiry into the legitimacy of your marriage; and, finally, that Monsieur should abandon both myself and the King of Spain. Such are the terms of the treaty; and were they

once accepted, who would be able to sustain your claims?"

The unfortunate Princess understood only too well the dangers of her position, and she accordingly exerted all her influence to obtain the dismissal of Puylaurens, but the brilliant favourite had become necessary to the existence of his frivolous master, far more so indeed than the wife who was no longer rendered resistless by novelty; and the only result of her entreaties was a peevish order not to listen to any complaints against those who were attached to his person.

With a weakness worthy of his character, Gaston moreover repeated to his favourite all that had taken place; and the fury of the latter reached so extreme a point that, in order to prove his contempt for the unhappy Queen—about to be deprived of the support and affection of her best-loved son, who had, like his elder brother, suffered himself to be made the tool of an ambitious follower—Puylaurens had on one occasion the audacity to enter her presence, followed by a train of twenty-five gentlemen, all fully armed, as though while approaching her he dreaded assassination.

Marie de Medicis looked for an instant upon him with an expression of scorn in her bright and steady eye beneath which his own sank; and then, rising from her seat, she walked haughtily from the apartment. Once arrived in her closet, however, her indignant pride gave way; and throwing herself upon the neck of

one of her attendants, she wept, the bitter tears of humiliation and despair.

Nor was this the only, or the heaviest, insult to which the widow of Henry IV. was subjected by the arrogant *protégé* of Monsieur, for anxious to secure his own advancement, and to aggrandise himself by means of Richelieu, since he had become convinced that his only hope of future greatness depended on the favour of the Cardinal, Puylaurens once more urged upon Gaston the expediency of accepting the conditions offered to him by the King. Weary of the petty court of Brussels, the Prince listened with evident pleasure to the arguments advanced by his favourite; the fair palaces of St. Germain and the Tuileries rose before his mental vision; his faction in Languedoc existed no longer; with his usual careless ingratitude he had already ceased to resent the death of Montmorency; his beautiful and heroic wife retained but a feeble hold upon his heart; and he pined for change.

Under such circumstances it was, consequently, not long ere Puylaurens induced him to consent to a renewal of the negociations; but, with that inability to keep a secret by which he was distinguished throughout his whole career, although urged to silence by his interested counsellor, it was not long ere Monsieur declared his intention alike to his mother and his wife, and terminated this extraordinary confidence by requesting that Marie de Medicis would give him her opinion as to the judiciousness of his determination.

"My opinion!" exclaimed the indignant Queen. "You should blush even to have listened to such a proposition. Have you forgotten your birth and your rank? What will be thought of such a treaty by the world? Simply that it was the work of a favourite, and not the genuine reconciliation of a prince of the blood royal of France, the heir-presumptive to the crown, with the King his brother. Your own honour and the interests of your wife are alike sacrificed; and should you ever be guilty of the injustice and cowardice of taking another wife before the death of Marguerite, who will guarantee that the children who may be born to you by the last will be regarded as legitimate? I do not speak of what concerns myself. When such conditions shall be offered to you as you may accept without dishonour, even although I may not be included in the amnesty, I shall be the first to advise you to accept them."

Gaston attempted no reply to this impassioned address, but it did not fail to produce its effect; and on returning to his own apartments he withdrew the consent which Puylaurens had extorted from him. The favourite, convinced that the answer of the Queen-mother had been dictated by Chanteloupe, hurried to her residence, insulted and menaced the Jesuit whom he encountered in an ante-room, and forcing himself into the chamber of Marie de Medicis, accused her in the most disrespectful terms of en-

deavouring to perpetuate the dissension of the King and his brother, in order to gratify her enmity towards Richelieu.

"Never," exclaimed the Queen-mother, quivering with indignation; "did even my enemy the Cardinal thus fail in respect towards me! He was far from daring to address me with such an amount of insolence as this. Learn that should I see fit to say a single word, and to receive him again to favour, I could overthrow all your projects. Leave the room, young madman, or I will have you flung from the windows. It is easy to perceive that your nature is as mean as your birth."*

Puylaurens retired; but thenceforward the existence of the Queen-mother became one unbroken tissue of mortification and suffering; and so bitterly did she feel the degradations to which she was hourly exposed, that she at length resolved to dispatch one of the gentlemen of her household to the King, to ascertain if she could obtain the royal permission to return to France upon such terms as she should be enabled to concede. In the letter which she addressed to her son, she touchingly complained of the indignities to which she was subjected by Monsieur and his favourite, and implored his Majesty to extricate her from a position against which she was unable to contend.

* Le Vassor, vol. vii, Book xxxv, pp. 248—251.

In his reply Louis assured her that he much regretted to learn that the Duke d'Orleans had been wanting in respect towards her person; but reminded her that such could never have been the case had she followed his own advice and that of his faithful servants; and terminated his missive by an intimation that in the event of her placing in his power all her evil counsellors, in order that he might punish them as they deserved, and of her also pledging herself to love, as she ought to do, the good servants of the crown, he might then believe that she was no longer so ill-disposed as she had been when she left France.

The disappointed Queen-mother at once recognised the hand of the Cardinal in this cold and constrained despatch, which was merely a renewal of her sentence of banishment; as Richelieu well knew that the high heart and generous spirit of the Tuscan princess would revolt at the enormity of sacrificing those who had clung to her throughout her evil fortunes, in order to secure her own impunity.

Unfortunately, alike for Marie de Medicis and Gaston d'Orleans, the amiable Infanta, who had proved so patient as well as so munificent a host—and who had, without murmur or reproach, seen her previously-tranquil and pious court changed by the dissipation and cabals of her foreign guests into a perpetual arena of strife and even bloodshed—the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, whose very name was reverenced throughout

the whole of the Low Countries, expired on the 1st of December at the age of sixty-eight, after having governed Flanders during thirty-five years.

This event was a source of alarm as well as of sorrow to the royal exiles, who could not anticipate an equal amount of forbearance from the Marquis d'Ayetona,* by whom she was provisionally replaced in the government; and who had long and loudly expressed his disgust at the perpetual feuds which convulsed the circles of the Queen-mother and her son, and declared that they had caused him more annoyance than all the subjects of the King his master in the Low Countries.† In this extremity both Marie and Monsieur became more than ever anxious to procure their recal to France; and Gaston soon succeeded in ascertaining the conditions upon which his pardon was to be accorded. Letters of abolition were to be granted for his past revolt: his several appanages were to be restored to him: the sum of seven hundred thousand crowns were to be paid over to meet his immediate exigences: he was to be invested with the government of Auvergne, and to have, as a body-guard, a troop of gensdarmes and light-horse, of which the command was to be conferred upon Puylaurens, to whom the offer of a dukedom was renewed;

* François de Moncade, Marquis d'Ayetona, Comte d'Osona, was born at Valencia in 1586; he was successively councillor of state, Governor of the Low Countries, and generalissimo of the Spanish armies. He died in 1635.

† Sismondi, vol. xxiii, p. 240.

and, in the event of Monsieur declining to reside at court, he was to be at liberty to fix his abode either in Auvergne or in Bourbonnais, as he saw fit; while, in any and every case, he was to live according to his own pleasure alike in Paris or the provinces.

And—in return for this indulgence—Monsieur was simply required to abandon his brother-in-law Charles of Lorraine to the vengeance of the King, without attempting any interference in his behalf; to detach himself wholly and unreservedly from all his late friends and adherents, both within and without the kingdom of France; to resign all alliance either personal or political with the Queen-mother; to be guided in every circumstance by the counsels of the Cardinal-minister; and to give the most stringent securities for his future loyalty.

Such were the conditions to which the heir-presumptive to the crown of France ultimately consented to affix his name, although for a time he affected to consider them as unworthy of his dignity; and meanwhile as the year drew to a close, a mutual jealousy had grown up between the mother and son which seconded all the views of Richelieu, whose principal aim was to prevent the return of either to France for as long a period as he could succeed in so doing.

CHAPTER XI.

[1634.]

INCREASING TRIALS OF THE EXILED QUEEN—HER PROPERTY IS SEIZED ON THE FRONTIER—SHE DETERMINES TO CONCILIATE THE CARDINAL — RICHELIEU REMAINS IMPLACABLE — FAR-REACHING AMBITION OF THE MINISTER — WEAKNESS OF LOUIS XIII. — INSIDIOUS ARGUMENTS OF RICHELIEU — MARIE DE MEDICIS IS AGAIN URGED TO ABANDON HER ADHERENTS — COWARDLY POLICY OF MONSIEUR — HE SIGNS A TREATY WITH SPAIN — THE QUEEN-MOTHER REFUSES TO JOIN IN THE CONSPIRACY — PUYLAURENS INDUCES MONSIEUR TO ACCEPT THE PROFFERED TERMS OF RICHELIEU — HE ESCAPES SECRETLY FROM BRUSSELS — GASTON PLEDGES HIMSELF TO THE KING TO "LOVE THE CARDINAL" — GASTON AGAIN REFUSES TO REPUDIATE HIS WIFE — PUYLAURENS OBTAINS THE HAND OF A RELATIVE OF THE MINISTER, AND BECOMES DUKE OF PUYLAURENS — MONSIEUR RETIRES TO BLOIS.

CHAPTER XI.

[1634.]

THE early months of the year 1634 were passed by Marie de Medicis in perpetual mortification and anxiety. The passport which she had obtained for the free transport of such articles of necessity as she might deem it expedient to procure from France, was disregarded, and her packages were subjected to a rigorous examination on the frontier; an insult of which she complained bitterly to Louis, declaring that if the Cardinal sought by such means to reduce her to a more pitiable condition than that in which she had already found herself, and thus to bend her to his will, the attempt would prove fruitless; as no amount of indignity should induce her to humble herself before him.

The unhappy Princess little imagined that in a few short weeks she should become a suppliant for his favour! Meanwhile* the struggle for pre-eminence continued unabated between Puylaurens and Chanteloupe;

* Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 143, 144.

and the life of the former having been on one occasion attempted, the faction of Monsieur did not hesitate to attribute the contemplated assassination to the adherents of the Queen-mother; whence arose continual conflicts between the two pigmy courts, which rendered unavailing all the efforts of the Marquis d'Avetona to reconcile the royal relatives. Moreover, Marie was indignant that the marquis constantly evinced towards her son a consideration in which he sometimes failed towards herself; and, finding her position becoming daily more onerous, she at length resolved to accomplish a reconciliation, not only with the King, but even with the minister, on any terms which she could obtain. In pursuance of this determination she gave instructions to M. le Rebours de Laleu her equerry, to proceed to Paris with her despatches, which consisted of three letters, one addressed to the sovereign, another to the Cardinal, and the third to M. de Bouthillier,* all of which severally contained earnest assurances of her intention to comply with the will and pleasure of the King in all things; and to obey his commands by foregoing for the future all enmity towards Richelieu. In that which she wrote to the minister himself, she carefully eschewed every

* Léon Bouthillier, Comte de Chavigny, the son of Claude Bouthillier, superintendent of finance, was in 1634 secretary of state. Louis XIII., in his will, appointed him minister of state, and member of the council of regency, but he was some time afterwards dismissed from office, together with his father. Léon Bouthillier died in 1726.

vestige of her former haughtiness, and threw herself completely on his generosity. "Cousin"—thus ran the letter of the once-powerful widow of Henry IV. to her implacable enemy; "the Sieur Bouthillier having assured me in your name, that my sorrows have deeply affected you, and that, regretting you should for so long a time have deprived me of the honour of seeing the King, your greatest satisfaction would now be to use your influence to obtain for me this happiness, I have considered myself bound to express to you through the Sieur Laleu, whom I dispatch to the King, how agreeable your good-will has been to me. Place confidence in him, and believe, Cousin, that I will ever truly be, &c. &c."

In addition to this humiliation, the heart-broken Queen at the same time gave instructions to her messenger to declare to the King, that, "having learned that his Majesty could not be persuaded of her affection for his own person so long as she refused to extend it to the Cardinal, he was empowered to assure his Majesty that the Queen-mother, from consideration for the King her son, would thenceforward bestow her regard upon his minister, and dismiss all resentment for the past."

Both the verbal and written declarations addressed to Louis on this occasion, were, as will at once be evident, a mere matter of form, and observance of the necessary etiquette. It was not the monarch of France whom Marie de Medicis sought to conciliate, but the Cardinal-Duke, who, as she was conscious, held her fate in his

hands. It was before him, consequently, that she bowed down; it was to his sovereign pleasure that she thus humbly demurred; but she felt that the long-enduring struggle which she had hitherto sustained against him was at once impotent and hopeless. Alas! she had, as she was fated ere long to experience, as little to anticipate from the abject concession which she now made, bitter as were the tears that it had cost her. The most annoying impediments were thrown in the way of her messenger when he solicited an audience of the sovereign, nor was he slow in arriving at the conviction that his mission would prove abortive. Nevertheless, as the command of Marie de Medicis had been that he should also deliver the letter to Richelieu in person; and, as he had already done in the case of the King, add to its written assurances his own corroborative declarations in her name, and even communicate to him the offer of Chanteloupe to retire to a monastery for the remainder of his life in the event of his exclusion from the treaty, he was bound to pursue his task to its termination, hopeless as it might be.*

When the envoy of the Queen-mother had delivered his despatches, and fulfilled the duty with which he had been intrusted, the embarrassment of the Cardinal became extreme. That the haughty Marie de Medicis should ever have compelled herself to such humiliation was an event so totally unexpected on his part, that he

* Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 159, 160.

had made no arrangements to meet it; and it appeared impossible even to him that, under the circumstances, the King could venture to refuse her immediate return to France. The crisis was a formidable one to Richelieu; who, judging both his injured benefactress and himself from the past, placed no faith in her professions of forgiveness; for, on his side, he felt that he should resent even to his dying hour much that had passed before she fled the kingdom, as well as the libels against him which she had sanctioned during her residence in Flanders. He had, moreover, as he asserted, on several occasions received information that Chanteloupe meditated some design upon his life; and that the Jesuit had stated in writing that he could never induce the Queen-mother to consent to separate herself from him, although he had entreated of her to leave him in the Low Countries when she returned to France.*

Poor and puerile, indeed, were such alleged terrors from the lips of the Cardinal-Duke de Richelieu—the first minister of one of the first sovereigns of Europe. What had he to fear from a powerless and impoverished Princess, whose misfortunes had already endured a sufficient time to out-weary her foreign protectors; to subdue the hopes, and to exhaust the energies of her former adherents; and to reduce her to an insignificance, of which, as her present measures sufficiently evinced, she had herself become hopelessly

* Siri, vol. vii, p. 761.

conscious? Even had Louis XIII. at this moment been possessed of sufficient right feeling and moral energy to remember that it was the dignity of a mother which he had so long sacrificed to the ambition of a minister—that it was the widow of the great monarch who had bequeathed to him a crown, whom he ruthlessly persecuted in order to further the fortunes of an ambitious ingrate—all these trivial hindrances might have been thrust aside at once; but the egotistical and timid temperament of the French king deadened the finer impulses of honour and of nature; and he still suffered himself to be governed, where he should have asserted his highest and his holiest prerogative.

It is impossible to contemplate without astonishment so extraordinary an anomaly as that which was presented by the King, the Queen-mother, and the Cardinal de Richelieu at this particular period. An obscure priest, elevated by the favour of a powerful Princess to the highest offices in the realm, after having reduced his benefactress to the necessity of humbling herself before him, and so unreservedly acknowledging his supremacy as to ask, as the only condition of his forgiveness, that he would do her the favour to believe in the sincerity of her professions.—The widow of Henry the Great, the mother of the King of France, and of the Queens of Spain and England, in danger of wearing out her age in exile, because Armand Jean du-Plessis, the younger son of a petty noble of Poitou, who once considered himself the most fortunate of mortals in obtaining the bishopric

of Luçon, feared that his unprecedented power might be shaken should his first friend and patroness be once more united to her son, and restored to the privileges of her rank.—And, finally, a sovereign, who, while in his better moments he felt all the enormity of his conduct towards the author of his being, now fast sinking under the combined weight of years and suffering, was yet deficient in the energy necessary to do justice alike to her and to himself.

Such, however, was the actual position of the several individuals; and the fate of Marie de Medicis was decided.

A desire of repose, consequent upon his failing health, self-gratulation at his triumph over an inimical and powerful faction, and a desire to exculpate himself from the charge of ingratitude, would have led the Cardinal to accede to a reconciliation with his long-estranged benefactress; but he soon silenced these natural impulses to dwell only upon the dangers of her reappearance in France, which could not, as he believed, fail to circumscribe his own absolute power—a power to which he had laboriously attained, not more by genius than by crime—which had been cemented by blood, and heralded by groans. Nor was this the only consideration by which Richelieu was swayed when he resolved that the Queen-mother should never again, so long as he had life, plant her foot upon the soil of France. His wide-searching ambition had, within the last few weeks, grasped at a greatness to which even he had not yet attained. For a time, as it is asserted by contempo-

raneous historian she indulged visions of royalty in his own person; and had in imagination, already fitted the crown of one of the first nations in Europe to his own brow; but the dream had been brief, and he had latterly resolved to transfer to one of his relatives the ermined purple in which he was not permitted to enfold himself. That relative was his niece and favourite, Madame de Comballet, whose hand he had offered to the Cardinal-Duke Francis of Lorraine, when that Prince succeeded to the sovereignty of the duchy on the abdication of his unfortunate brother Charles; but to avoid whose alliance the new Duke had contracted a secret marriage with his cousin the Princess Claude; a disappointment which the minister of Louis XIII. was desirous to repair by causing the dissolution of the marriage of Gaston d'Orleans with Marguerite of Lorraine, and making his union with his own beautiful and unprincipled niece the condition of his restoration to favour.

Aware that the Queen-mother would resent such an indignity even to the death, Richelieu was consequently resolved to terminate at once a negociation of which the result could not fail to be fatal to his project, should the King in some moment of piety and contrition, suffer himself to remember that it was a mother as well as a Queen who appealed to his indulgence; and who, however she might have erred, had bitterly expiated her faults. Thus then, the Cardinal no sooner saw the agitation of Louis on reading the letter of the exiled

Princess, and marked the flashing of his eyes as he became aware that she promised, as he had required of her, to restore the Cardinal to her affection, than the latter hastened to remind him that he must not overlook the fact that he was a sovereign as well as a son; and that the safety of the state required his attention no less than the gratification of his natural feelings.

This was a point upon which Richelieu knew his royal master to be peculiarly susceptible; for the more thoroughly the weak monarch suffered himself to be stripped of his actual authority, the more anxiety did he evince to retain its semblance; and the argument thus advanced instantly sufficed, as the minister had anticipated, to change the whole current of his feelings. It was, moreover, easy to convince Louis that the professions of Marie de Medicis were hollow and unmeaning words so long as she refused to deliver up to his Majesty the obnoxious members of her household; for, in truth, as the Cardinal did not fail to remark, had not Monsieur abandoned his adherents when required to do so as a pledge of his sincerity? And, as he asked the insidious question, the distrustful Louis, trembling for his tranquillity, forgot, or did not care to remember, that the egotism and cowardice of his brother in thus building up his own fortune on the ruins of those who had confided in him, had deeply wounded the dignity of the Queen-mother.

The result of the conference between the King and his minister was an order to the envoy of Marie de

Medicis to repair to the residence of the Cardinal at Ruel, where he was informed that he would have an audience, at which both Louis XIII. and Richelieu would personally deliver to him their despatches for his royal mistress. On his arrival at the château, however, he was surprised to find the Cardinal alone, and to learn that his Majesty was not expected. To counteract this disappointment, de Laleu was received with such extraordinary distinction that he could not avoid expressing his astonishment at the honours which were lavished upon him; when Richelieu, with one of those bland smiles which were ever at his command, declared that the respect due to the illustrious Princess whom he served, demanded still greater demonstrations on his part had it been in his power to afford them on such an occasion. He then proceeded to inform the envoy that the Queen-mother could never be otherwise than welcome, whenever she might see fit to return to France; but that, in order to be convinced that she would never again suffer herself to be misled by those who had so long induced her to oppose his wishes, the King desired that she would previously deliver up to him the Jesuit Chanteloupe, the Abbé de St. Germain, and the Viscount de Fabbroni,* as his

* Luc, Vicomte de Fabbroni, was a celebrated astrologer, who attached himself to the fortunes of Marie de Medicis, to whom he had, on several occasions, predicted the early death of Louis XIII., the accession of Gaston d'Orleans, and her own restoration to regal power.

Majesty could not place any confidence in the stability of her affection so long as those individuals were still alive. On his own part, the Cardinal declared his extreme gratification at the proof afforded by the letter of the Queen-mother to himself that his enemies had been unable to undermine her regard; and earnestly urged her to comply with the pleasure of the King on the subject of her above-named servants, by which means she could not fail to convince every one that she had disapproved their disloyalty and evil designs.

"Nor can I forbear reminding her Majesty;" he concluded; "with the same frankness as I formerly used towards her, that, after what has passed, it would be impossible for the King not to feel great distrust, which it will be expedient to exert all her energies to overcome, in order to build up the desired reconciliation on a solid foundation. This once effected, she will soon receive sufficient evidence that she possesses one of the most affectionate sons on earth; and she will become aware of the sincere attachment of one of her servants, although he is unable under the present circumstances to urge her cause more zealously than he has already done, without incurring the serious displeasure of his sovereign. The difficulties which I have now explained, however, are mere clouds which her Majesty can readily disperse; and the King will further declare to you to-morrow at St. Germain-en-Laye, where you will be admitted to an audience, whatever he may deem it expedient to communicate to his august mother."

On the following day the equerry of Marie de Medicis accordingly proceeded to the palace indicated, where he found Louis with a brow so moody, and an eye so cold, that he was at no loss to discover the utter futility of all hope of success. The promised communication proved indeed to be a mere repetition of what had already been stated by the Cardinal; but, contrary to custom (his difficulty of articulation rendering the King unwilling on ordinary occasions to indulge in much speaking, diffuse as he was on paper), he enlarged at greater length, and with infinitely more violence than Richelieu had done, upon the misdemeanours of the three individuals whom he claimed at the hands of the Queen-mother; as well as on the necessity of her prompt obedience; which alone could, as he declared, tend to convince him that she had been guiltless of all participation in their crimes.

As the mission of the envoy was accomplished, he commenced his preparations for leaving France; but before they were completed he received fresh despatches from Marie de Medicis, in which she confirmed her former promises both to her son and his minister, in terms still more submissive than those of her previous letters; and requested a passport for Suffren her confessor, in order that he might plead her cause.

Richelieu was, however, too well aware of the timid and scrupulous nature of the King's conscience, and of the eagerness with which the able Jesuit would

avail himself of a similar knowledge, to suffer him to approach the person of Louis; and he consequently replied that "it would be useless for the Queen-mother to send her confessor, or any other individual to the French court, unless they brought with them her consent to the condition upon which his Majesty had insisted; as he had come to an irrevocable determination never to yield upon that point, and to refuse to listen to any other envoy whom she might dispatch to him, until she had afforded by her obedience a proof of submission which was indispensable alike to her own reputation, the tranquillity of the royal family, and the welfare of the kingdom."

While awaiting the reappearance of de Laleu, all the household of Marie de Medicis, with the exception of Chanteloupe and one or two others, began to anticipate a speedy return to France. The concessions which she had made were, indeed, so important and so unforeseen, that it seemed idle to apprehend any further opposition on the part either of the King himself, or of his still more obdurate minister. Great therefore was their dismay when they discovered that their unhappy mistress had sacrificed her pride in vain, and that she still remained the victim of her arch-enemy the Cardinal. But among the murmurs by which she was surrounded not one proceeded from the lips of the persecuted exile herself. Never had she so nobly asserted herself as on this occasion. Her resignation was dignified and tearless. In a few earnest

words she declared, her determination never to abandon those who had clung to her in her reverses; and, as a pledge of her sincerity, she appointed the Abbé de St. Germain to the long-vacant office of her almoner.*

From Monsieur she experienced no sympathy; while Puylaurens openly expressed his gratification at a failure which could but tend to render the negociations then pending between the Prince his master and the King more favourable to the former. One serious impediment presented itself, however, in the fact that Gaston had, at the entreaty of the Princess de Phalsbourg, (in order to counteract the attempt of Richelieu, who sought to contest its legitimacy,) consented to celebrate his marriage a second time, in the presence of the Duke d'Elbœuf, and all the principal officers of his household. He had also solicited the Queen-mother to confirm the approval which she had given to the alliance when it had been originally celebrated at Nancy, and to affix her seal to the written contract; but Marie de Medicis, who was aware that the King would deeply resent this open and formal defiance, declined to comply with his request; having, as she assured him, resolved to abide by the pleasure of the sovereign in all things, and to avoid every cause of offence.

As the Prince still continued to urge her upon

* Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 158—163. Siri, vol. vii, pp. 763, 764. Le Vassor, vol. vii, p. 360.

the subject, she said coldly: "You persist in vain. You have evinced so little regard for me, and you reject with so much obstinacy the good advice which I give you, that I have at length determined never again to interfere in your affairs. My decision is formed; and henceforward I shall implicitly obey the will of the King."

This circumstance was immediately reported to Richelieu; who, delighted to maintain the coldness which had grown up between the mother and son, hastened to insinuate to Marie de Medicis that Louis had expressed his gratification at her refusal; and to assure her that should she suffer the Prince to extort her consent to such an act of wilful revolt against the royal command she would inevitably ruin her own cause.

Having publicly ratified his marriage by this second solemnisation, Monsieur next proceeded to have it confirmed and approved by the doctors of the faculty of Louvain; to write to the Sovereign-Pontiff, declaring that the alliance which he had formed was valid; and to entreat of his Holiness to disregard all assurances to the contrary, from whatever quarter they might proceed.

In order to give additional weight to these declarations, Gaston sent them by an express to the papal court; but his messenger having been arrested on the frontier, was conveyed to Paris, and committed to the Bastille; upon which, a second envoy was

dispatched, who succeeded in accomplishing his mission.* This obstacle to the coveted establishment of his niece enraged the almost omnipotent minister; while Gaston, in his turn, encouraged by the representations of his favourite, communicated to the Marquis d'Ayetona the conditions of the treaty which had been proposed to him, and declared that he would enter into no engagement without the sanction of the Spanish sovereign. The past career of Monsieur had by no means tended to induce an unreserved confidence in those whom he affected to regard; and the able governor accordingly replied, with an equal degree of sincerity, that he strongly advised the Prince to terminate a struggle which could only tend to distract the kingdom over which he would, in all probability, soon be called upon to rule; but at the same time to insist upon the royal recognition of his marriage, as well as upon holding a fortified town as a place of refuge, should he hereafter require such protection. He, moreover, pointed out Chalons-sur-Soane as an eligible stronghold; and having thus indicated conditions which he was well aware would never be conceded, the marquis flattered himself that he had for a time at least, rendered a reconciliation between the royal brothers impracticable.†

He was greatly encouraged in this belief when Mon-

* Gaston d'Orleans, Mém., pp. 155, 156.

† Siri, vol. vii, p. 756.

sieur, who affected to regard his return to France as a mere chimera, subsequently consented to sign a treaty with Spain, by which he pledged himself not to enter into any agreement with Louis XIII., be the conditions what they might; and, in the event of a war between the two nations, to attach himself to the cause of Philip, who was to place under his orders an army of fifteen thousand men.*

This treaty was signed by the Duke d'Orleans and the Marquis d'Ayetona, and countersigned by the Duke de Lerma and Puylaurens; and the Spaniards had no sooner succeeded in obtaining it, than both the Marquis and the Prince of Savoy, who had recently entered the Spanish service, urged the Queen-mother to join the faction. Marie, however, rejected the proposition without the hesitation of a moment, declaring that she could not permit herself to form any alliance so prejudicial to the interests of the King her son; an act of prudence and good-feeling on which she had soon additional cause to congratulate herself; as, the Marquis d'Ayetona, immediately on its completion, forwarded the treaty to Madrid, where it was ratified and returned without delay; but, the vessel by which it was sent having been driven on shore near Calais, the despatches fell into the hands of the French authorities, by whom they were forwarded to the minister, whose alarm on discovering the nature of

* Capefigue, vol. v, p. 216. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, p. 241. Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 166, 167. Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 443.

their contents determined him to lose no time in effecting the recal of the false and faction-loving Prince.

A second attempt which was made upon the life of Puylaurens at this precise period admirably seconded his views; as the favourite, who persisted in attributing the act to the friends of the Queen-mother, declared that he would no longer remain at Brussels, where his safety was constantly compromised; and Gaston, who was equally unwilling to consent to a separation, accordingly resolved to waive the conditions upon which he had previously insisted—namely, the recognition of his marriage, and the possession of a fortified place—and to submit to the degrading terms which had been offered by Richelieu.

On this occasion, however, Monsieur was careful not to seek advice either from his mother or his wife. For once he had self-government enough to keep his secret, although the constant passage of the couriers between the two courts of Paris and Brussels did not fail to alarm the Spaniards; but as the anxiety of the Cardinal to secure the person of the Prince had induced him to insist that the prescribed conditions should be accepted within a fortnight, and that Gaston must return to France within three weeks, little time was afforded to Ayetona for elucidating the apparent mystery; and on the 1st of October the treaty of reconciliation was signed by the King at Escouan.

It would appear, moreover, that the Prince and his

favourite were as little desirous of delay as the Cardinal himself; for on the 8th of the same month, profiting by the temporary absence of the marquis, Monsieur pretexting a fox-hunt left Brussels early in the morning, accompanied only by a few confidential friends; and so soon as they were fairly beyond the city, they set spurs to their horses, and never drew bridle until after sunset, when they reached La Capelle, the frontier-town of France, not having taken the slightest refreshment throughout the day.* For some time previous to his flight Gaston had estranged himself not only from the Queen-mother but also from Madame; and their astonishment was not unmingled with indignation when they became aware that he had thus heartlessly abandoned both in order to secure his own safety. A hurried and brief letter in which he solicited the protection of Marie de Medicis for his ill-requited wife was the only proof which he vouchsafed of his continued interest in their welfare; and this dispatched, he pursued his rapid journey to St. Germain-en-Laye, having previously apprised the King of his approach to the capital.

Louis was at table when the arrival of his brother was announced, but he instantly rose, and hastened to meet him at the door of the palace.

When he alighted and recognised the King, Gaston

* Siri, vol. viii, pp. 101, 102. Gaston d'Orleans, Mém., p. 169. Le Vassor, vol. viii, p. 307.

bowed low, but did not attempt to bend his knee. "Sir;" he said reverently; "I know not if it be joy or fear which renders me speechless, but I have at least words enough left to solicit your pardon for the past."

"Brother;" replied the King; "we will not speak of the past. God has given us the happiness of meeting once more, and the moment is a joyful one to me."

The two princes then embraced each other with every appearance of sincerity and good-will; after which Louis led Monsieur to his private closet, where they were shortly joined by the Cardinal.

As the latter was announced Louis XIII. exclaimed earnestly: "Brother, I entreat of you to love M. le Cardinal."

"I will love him," was the reply of the Prince; "as I love myself; and I will follow his advice in all things."

Richelieu fell on his knees, and kissed the hands of Monsieur.

Gaston d'Orleans was, for the moment, gained.*

The first few days of this royal reunion were entirely devoted to festivity; after which the minister endeavoured to induce the Prince to consent to the annulation of his marriage with the Princess of Lorraine; but upon this point Gaston evinced a firmness which astonished all those who were able to appreciate the recklessness and instability of his general character; and, finding

* Capefigue, vol. v, 228, 229.

himself pressed beyond his power of endurance, he retired to Blois, accompanied by Puylaurens; whence he wrote to remonstrate against the delay which had taken place in the fulfilment of the promises made to his favourite. Uneasy lest the restless spirit of the Prince should induce him once more to revolt if his claims remained disregarded, Richelieu caused him to be apprised that M. de Puylaurens was awaited in Paris in order that his marriage might be concluded with the younger daughter of the Baron de Pontchâteau, on the same day that the Duke de la Valette was to espouse the elder; while the Count de Guiche, son of the Count de Grammont, was also to give his hand to Mademoiselle du Plessis-Chivray, another relative of the Cardinal-minister. This intelligence caused the greatest satisfaction to Monsieur, who forthwith proceeded to the capital with Puylaurens; and on the 19th of November both the Prince and his favourite were magnificently entertained at Ruel, whence they subsequently departed for St. Germain, in order to sign the contract in the presence of the King.

On the 26th of the same month the triple ceremony of betrothal took place at the Louvre. A full and unreserved pardon was publicly declared in favour of all the adherents of Monsieur; and two days subsequently the several marriages were celebrated with great pomp at the Arsenal. The lordship of Aiguillon, which had been purchased for six hundred thousand livres of the Princess Marie de Gonzaga, was erected into a duchy-

peerage under the name of Puylaurens, upon whom it was conferred, and who took his seat in the Parliament on the 7th of December as Duke de Puylaurens; after which Gaston once more returned to Blois, in order to avoid the persevering persecutions of the minister on the subject of his marriage.

CHAPTER XII.

[1635—38.]

RICHELIEU RESOLVES TO ACCOMPLISH THE DISGRACE OF PUYLAURENS — GASTON PROCEEDS TO PARIS DURING THE CARNIVAL, AND HIS FAVOURITE IS ARRESTED IN THE LOUVRE—HE IS CONVEYED TO VINCENNES, WHERE HE DIES—THE QUEEN-MOTHER AND MADAME TAKE UP THEIR ABODE AT ANTWERP—MARIE DE MEDICIS SOLICITS THE PROTECTION OF THE POPE—HER LETTER IS COLDLY RECEIVED—SHE IS ACCUSED BY RICHELIEU OF FAVOURING THE SPANISH CAUSE—SHE ENDEAVOURS TO DISSUADE LOUIS XIII. FROM A WAR WITH SPAIN, AND HER ARGUMENTS ARE HAUGHTILY REPULSED — HER ENVOY IS ORDERED TO QUIT THE CAPITAL — THE QUEEN-MOTHER ONCE MORE APPEALS TO THE SOVEREIGN-PONTIFF, WHO DECLINES TO EXCITE AGAINST HIMSELF THE ENMITY OF THE CARDINAL-MINISTER — LOUIS XIII. PURSUES THE WAR WITH SPAIN—MONSIEUR AND THE COUNT DE SOISSONS ENTER INTO A CONSPIRACY TO ASSASSINATE RICHELIEU—THE QUEEN-MOTHER JOINS THE FACTION—THE PLOT IS BETRAYED—GASTON RETURNS TO HIS ALLEGIANCE—MARIE DE MEDICIS INDUCES THE COUNT DE SOISSONS TO ENTER INTO A TREATY WITH SPAIN—THE INTRIGUE IS DISCOVERED BY THE CARDINAL—THE QUEEN-MOTHER ONCE MORE SOLICITS AN ASYLUM IN ENGLAND—CHARLES I. ACCEDES TO HER REQUEST, AND ENDEAVOURS TO EFFECT HER RECONCILIATION WITH THE FRENCH KING—RICHELIEU DETERMINES LOUIS TO REPLY BY A REFUSAL—MONSIEUR ABANDONS HIS WIFE, WHO BECOMES DEPENDENT FOR HER SUPPORT UPON THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT — INSIGNIFICANCE OF GASTON — THE DUCHESS OF SAVOY ENDEAVOURS TO EFFECT THE RECAL OF HER ROYAL MOTHER TO FRANCE—THE THREE CHURCHMEN—PREGNANCY OF ANNE OF AUSTRIA —RENEWED HOPES OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—SHE IS AGAIN URGED TO RESIDE IN TUSCANY — SHE PROCEEDS TO HOLLAND, AND IS MAGNIFICENTLY RECEIVED — THE PRINCE OF ORANGE INTERCEDES

IN HER BEHALF WITH THE FRENCH KING—RICHELIEU REITERATES HIS WISH THAT SHE SHOULD RETIRE TO FLORENCE—THE DUTCH REQUEST HER TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY—MARIE DE MEDICIS EMBARKS FOR ENGLAND—SHE IS RECEIVED AT GRAVESEND BY CHARLES I.—TAKES UP HER ABODE IN ST. JAMES'S PALACE—MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO QUEENS—PRECARIOUS POSITION OF THE ENGLISH KING—THE COURT OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IS INSTRUCTED TO ABSTAIN FROM ALL INTERCOURSE WITH THE ROYAL EXILE—A LAST APPEAL—OBDURACY OF THE CARDINAL—RICHELIEU, HIS SOVEREIGN, AND HIS BENEFACTRESS.

CHAPTER XII.

[1635—38.]

RICHELIEU, however, was far from intending that the Duke d'Orleans should remain unmolested in his retreat. Puylaurens was the first individual who had dared to dictate his own terms, and to enforce their observance; and although his Eminence had a great affection for his niece, he was by no means inclined to pardon the arrogance of her husband. An opportunity of revenge soon presented itself. The attractions of the carnival proved too great for the prudence of Gaston, who accordingly proceeded to the capital, in order to share in its delights; and as he reached the Louvre on the 14th of February, 1635, where he was expected to attend the rehearsal of a ballet, his favourite, by whom he was accompanied, was arrested in the royal closet by the captain of the guard, and conveyed to Vincennes. This act of severity was as unexpected at the moment as it remained unexplained in the sequel

Suffice it that Monsieur did not permit the disgrace of his chosen and trusted friend to interfere with his own amusement and gratification at so exciting a season, although he could not fail to feel that, once in the grasp of the Cardinal, the unhappy Puylaurens was doomed.

The result proved the truth of this apprehension; nobler and prouder lives than that of the spoiled favourite of Gaston had been sacrificed to the enmity of Richelieu. The tears and supplications of the heart-broken bride were disregarded; and four months after his arrest, Puylaurens expired in his prison of, as it was asserted, typhus fever—the same disease to which, by an extraordinary coincidence, the two former enemies of the Cardinal, the Maréchal d'Ornano and the Grand-Prior of Vendôme, had both fallen victims when confined at Vincennes.*

During this time the unhappy Queen-mother, who found herself abandoned on every side, had retired to Antwerp with the Princess Marguerite, in order to escape the mortifications to which she was constantly subjected by the increasing coldness of her Spanish allies; and thence she wrote earnestly to the Sovereign-Pontiff to entreat his interference to effect her reconciliation with the King, and to induce him to exert his influence to avert the war with Spain which the Cardinal was labouring to provoke. The answer which she received

* Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 197, 198. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 253, 254. Siri, vol. viii, p. 354.

to this despatch was cold and discouraging, but she still persevered; and in a second letter upon the same subjects, she apprised his Holiness that she had appointed the Abbé de Fabbroni (one of her almoners) her resident at the court of Rome; and had dispatched another gentleman of her household to the Emperor of Germany to enforce a similar request. She, moreover, wrote to inform Mazarin, who was at that period extraordinary-nuncio in France, that she had addressed her son-in-law Philip of Spain for the like purpose, and requested him to deliver into the hands of Louis XIII. a despatch by which his own was accompanied. Her selection of an agent on this occasion was, however, an unfortunate one, as Mazarin was devoted to the interests of the Cardinal-minister, to whom he immediately transferred the packet, when the first impulse of Richelieu was to suppress it; but having ascertained that the Queen-mother had caused several copies to be made, and that she could not ultimately fail to seeure its transmission, he endeavoured to weaken the effect of her remonstrances by accusing her of an attempt to corrupt the loyalty of the Duke de Rohan, and to induce him to adopt the interests of Spain.

This accusation sufficed to render Louis impassible alike to the entreaties and the arguments of his mother; and when Mazarin, in order to maintain appearances, requested a reply to the letter with which he had been intrusted, the King declined to furnish one, asserting that should he concede any

answer to so seditious, so Spanish, and so hypocritical a missive, while the Queen was engaged in endeavouring to alienate one of his great nobles, he should be compelled to represent to her the crime of which she was guilty towards the state; and that the affectation with which she had dwelt upon the desire of the late King to maintain a good understanding with Spain was merely an expedient for vilifying his own government, indulging her hatred of the Cardinal, and seeking to create a rebellion among his subjects. He added, moreover, that when the Queen should see fit to act as became his mother, he would honour her as such; and that it was in order not to fail in his respect towards her that he forbore to reply to her communication, although the nuncio was at liberty to do so in his name should he consider it expedient.*

Nor was this the only mortification to which Marie de Medicis was subjected by her attempt to preserve the peace of Europe; for Richelieu, irritated by her interference, no sooner became aware that she had dispatched the Abbé de Fabbroni to Rome, than he instructed the French ambassador at that court to complain to his Holiness of so unprecedented an innovation; and to remind him that the Queen-mother was not a sovereign, but a subject; and consequently did not possess the privilege of appointing a resident at any foreign court; but must,

* Siri, vol. viii, p. 272. Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 202—207.

on every occasion when treating with his Holiness, avail herself of the services of the accredited envoy of the King her son.

To this expostulation, however, Urban replied that the circumstance was not without precedent, as bishops had agents at the papal court; but, notwithstanding the apparent firmness with which he withstood the arguments of the Cardinal, it is asserted that he privately intimated to M. de Fabbroni the expediency of his immediate departure; a suggestion which was obeyed upon the instant.*

The indignation of Marie de Medicis at this new insult was unbounded. Again she addressed the Sovereign-Pontiff, and inveighed bitterly on the persecution of which she was the victim; but beyond the mere expression of his sympathy the Pope declined all interference between herself and the minister, whose gigantic power rendered his enmity formidable even to the head of the church. Once more the widow of one of the most vaunted sovereigns of France was compelled to bow in silence to the enmity of an individual whom she had herself elevated to influence and dignity; and while France was engaged in a war which not only rivetted the attention, but also involved the interests of the whole of Europe, history is silent as to her sufferings. All that can be gathered concerning her is the fact that the Spaniards, resenting the reverses to which they were subjected by the armies

* Le Vassor, vol. viii, pp. 516, 517.

of Louis XIII., became less than ever inclined to sympathise in her sufferings as they discovered her utter helplessness; nor was it until the Duke d'Orleans and the Count de Soissons entered into a conspiracy (in 1636) to overthrow the Cardinal, that she was once more involved in public affairs.

Meanwhile the piety of the Queen-mother had degenerated into superstition; she had applied to the Pope to authorise the canonisation of an obscure nun of Antwerp; and, in accordance with the directions of Suffren her confessor, and Chanteloupe her confidant, she had abandoned herself to the most rigorous observances of her faith. But ambition was "scotched, not killed," in the soul of Marie de Medicis; and she no sooner saw the princes in open rebellion against the power of Richelieu than her hopes once more revived, and she made instant preparations to join their faction. The design was, however, betrayed, and thus rendered abortive; upon which Gaston, according to his wont, soon submitted to the terms dictated by the minister, and returned to his allegiance, abandoning M. de Soissons, who proved less complying, to the displeasure of the King; when (in 1637) the Queen-mother, whose hopes had been nearly extinguished by the defeat of the Spaniards at Corbie, and their retreat beyond the frontiers of Picardy, wrote to the count, tendering to him the most advantageous offers, both from the Spanish monarch and the Prince Thomas of Savoy; and offering personally to enter into the treaty. This pro-

position was eagerly accepted by M. de Soissons; and reciprocal promises of assistance and good-faith were exchanged; while the Cardinal-infant, on his side, made a solemn compact with the exiled Queen that the Catholic King should conclude neither peace nor truce with France until Marie de Medicis and the Count de Soissons were re-established in their rights; that the Queen-mother should reject all conditions of reconciliation until after the death or disgrace of Richelieu; that, should either one or the other event occur before the existing dissension between France and the house of Austria was adjusted, the Queen-mother, the Count de Soissons, and all their French adherents should remain neuter during the space of four months, which were to be employed by all parties in endeavours to secure a general peace; that, in the event of its not being concluded at the expiration of that period, Marie de Medicis and Soissons should be free to effect their reconciliation with the French king, without incurring the blame of forfeiting their faith to Philip of Spain; that the last-named monarch should furnish two hundred and fifty thousand livres in ready money, and an equal sum a month later in property equivalent to specie; and that if the Count de Soissons were compelled to retire from France, the King of Spain should afford him his protection, and furnish him with sufficient means to live according to his birth and rank.

A treaty of this nature, so formidable in its con-

ception, and so threatening in its results, could not long remain a secret to the Cardinal-minister; and accordingly he did not fail to be apprised of the intrigue before it had time to produce its effect, and resolved to conciliate the Count de Soissons, even were it only for the present moment. Of Marie de Medicis he had long ceased to feel any apprehension; and he consequently made no effort to include her in the amnesty; a demonstration of contempt which so deeply wounded the exiled Princess that she resolved to dispatch a messenger to the court of London to solicit the interposition of Charles I. and Henrietta in her behalf; but despite all her disappointments the Queen-mother still sought to obtain conditions which past experience should have sufficed to prove that Richelieu never would accord.

The English monarch had, indeed, yielded to the entreaties of a wife to whom he was at that period devotedly attached, and had consented to exert all his influence in favour of the unhappy Princess, who now saw herself abandoned by both her sons; but the state of his own kingdom was too unsettled to permit of his enforcing terms which he consequently perceived to be hopeless. Nevertheless he acceded to her request, and forwarded to the court of France the document which was delivered to him by her envoy. but it produced no effect; and while every other state-criminal was reinstated in the favour of the King, on tendering the required submission, and

conforming to the stipulated conditions, the Queen-mother found herself excluded from all hope of recal, and all prospect of reconciliation.

Richelieu was aware that necessity alone had induced her to pronounce his pardon, and that her wrongs were too great ever to be forgotten. No wonder, therefore, that he shrank from a struggle which, should the voice of popular favour once more be raised in her behalf, might tend to his overthrow; and that struggle, as he well knew, could take place only on the soil of France. Her exile was his safety; and the astute Cardinal had long determined that it should end only with her life.*

On every side the unfortunate Marie de Medicis saw herself surrounded by misfortune. Gaston, at the instigation of the Cardinal, had ceased to supply his ill-requited wife with the means of supporting, not merely her rank, but even her existence, and had left her dependent upon the generosity of the Spanish government which he had so unblushingly betrayed. He had himself become a mere cypher in the kingdom over which he hoped one day to rule. He seldom appeared at court; and when he was prevailed upon to do so, he was the obsequious admirer of Richelieu, and the submissive subject of the King. The Spaniards, since the departure of the heir-apparent to the French crown, had ceased to evince the same respect towards the mother whom he had abandoned; and although they still accorded to her

* Le Vassor, vol. ix, pp. 154—160.

a pension that placed her above want, the munificence with which they had greeted her arrival had long ceased to call forth her gratitude. Her position was consequently desperate; and her only prospect of escaping from so miserable a fate as that by which she was ultimately threatened existed in the hope that should she voluntarily retire from Flanders, and place herself under the protection of England, she might yet succeed in enforcing her claims.

While she was still meditating this project, Christine, the widowed Duchess of Savoy, resolved to make a last effort to effect the recal of her persecuted mother to France; and for this purpose she dispatched to Paris a Jesuit named Monod, who succeeded in establishing a friendship with Caussin, the King's confessor, whom he induced to second the attempt. As both one and the other, however, believed success to be impossible so long as Richelieu retained his influence over the mind of the sovereign, they resolved to undermine his favour. Caussin, like all his predecessors, had great power over the timid conscience and religious scruples of his royal penitent, and the two Jesuits were well aware that through these alone could Louis be rendered vulnerable to their entreaties; while they were, moreover, encouraged in their hopes by the circumstance that the Cardinal-minister had never evinced the slightest distrust of Caussin, whom he believed to be devoted to his interests; and that he consequently possessed ample opportunity to prosecute his object.

At the close of the year therefore the attempt was made; and, as the Jesuit had anticipated, Louis listened with submission and even respect to his expostulations. "Your minister misleads you, Sire;" said his confessor; "where your better nature would guide you in the right path. He it is who has induced your Majesty to abandon your mother, who is not only condemned to exile, but reduced to the greatest necessity, and indebted to strangers for the very means of existence."

The King was visibly moved by this assertion, but he remained silent, and suffered the ecclesiastic to proceed. Emboldened by this attention, Caussin did not scruple to declare that the Cardinal had usurped an amount of power which tended to degrade the royal authority; that the subjects of France were reduced to misery by the exorbitant taxation to which they were subjected; and that the interests of religion itself were threatened by Richelieu, who was affording help to the Swedes and the Protestants of Germany.

"Shake off this yoke, Sire;" concluded the Jesuit; "exert your royal prerogative; and dismiss the Cardinal-duke from office. Be the sovereign of your own nation, and the master of your own actions. You will have a more tranquil conscience, and a more prosperous reign."

"You are perhaps right, Father;" replied the King with emotion; "but you must give me time for reflection."

Caussin obeyed, auguring well of his mission; but

his self-gratulation was premature, for he had scarcely left the closet of his penitent when he was succeeded by the Cardinal, who perceiving the agitation of the King, experienced little difficulty in extorting from him the subject of the conversation in which he had just been engaged; and a few moments sufficed to restore alike the complacency of Louis, and his confidence in his minister.

There is sufficient evidence to prove that the French king never bestowed his regard upon Richelieu; as a boy he had evinced towards him an undisguised aversion which he never overcame, but he had learnt to fear him; the futile mind of the monarch had bowed before the strong intellect of the minister; the sovereign could not contend against the statesman; the crown of France rested upon the brows of the one, but her destinies were poised in the hand of the other; and the strength of Richelieu grew out of the weakness of his master.

As a natural consequence of his imprudence Caussin was shortly afterwards arrested, and banished to Brittany; and the Cardinal no sooner ascertained the complicity of Monod, than, despite the reluctance of the Duchess of Savoy to abandon a man who had hazarded his life in her cause, he was, in his turn, condemned to expiate his error by a rigorous captivity.*

The unhoped-for pregnancy of Anne of Austria at this period once more revived the hopes of Marie de Medicis,

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 489, 490.

who trusted that on such an occasion a general amnesty would necessarily supervene. She deceived herself, however; for although Richelieu professed the greatest desire to see her once more in France, he was in reality as earnest as ever in creating obstacles to a reconciliation so inimical to his own interests. In vain did the unhappy Queen-mother remind him of her advancing age and her increasing necessities; and plead that, whatever might have been her former errors, they must now be considered as expiated by seven weary years of exile; the minister only replied by expressions of his profound regret that the internal politics of the kingdom did not permit him to urge her recal upon the sovereign; and his extreme desire to see her select a residence elsewhere than within the territory of his enemies, where she was subjected to perpetual suspicion; while, should she determine to fix her abode at Florence, his Majesty was prepared to restore all her forfeited revenues, and to confer upon her an establishment suited to her rank and dignity.

As Richelieu was well aware, no proposal could be more unpalatable than this to the haughty Princess. Eight-and-thirty years had elapsed since Marie de Medicis, then in the full pride of youth and beauty, had quitted her uncle's court in regal splendour to ascend the throne of France; and now—how did the heartless minister urge her to return? Hopeless friendless, and powerless; with a name which had

become a mockery, to a family wherein she would be a stranger. At Florence her existence was a mere tradition. All who had once loved her were dispersed or dead; no personal interest bound her to their survivors; and where long years previously she might have claimed affection, she could now only anticipate pity, or dread contempt. The perpetual illnesses of the King, moreover, rendered her averse to such a measure; every succeeding attack had produced a more marked effect upon the naturally feeble constitution of Louis; the astrologers by whom she was surrounded continued to foretel his approaching death; and she yet indulged visions of a second regency, during which she might once more become all-powerful.

Nevertheless, however, she could not conceal from herself that by persisting to remain in a country at open war with France, she strengthened the hands of Richelieu without advancing her own interests; and although she felt that she could ill dispense with the generosity of her son-in-law Philip of Spain, who, even at a period when he frequently found himself unable to meet the demands of his army, still continued to treat her with a munificence truly royal, she resolved to withdraw from the Low Countries; and, accordingly, on the 10th of August, alleging that she was about to remove to Spa for the restoration of her health, she took her leave of the court of Brussels; and, suddenly changing her route, proceeded to Bois-le-Duc, where

she placed herself under the protection of the Prince of Orange.*

The arrival of the Queen-mother in Holland excited universal gratulation, as the Dutch did not for an instant doubt that it was a preliminary to a reconciliation with her son; and once more she found herself the object of universal homage. Municipal processions, and burgher banquets were hastily arranged in her honour; every hôtel-de-ville was ceded for her accommodation; burgomasters harangued her, and citizens formed her body-guard; while so enthusiastic were the self-deceived Hollanders that even Art was enlisted in her welcome, and engravings still exist wherein her reception is commemorated under the most extravagant allegories; one of which represents the aged and broken-hearted Queen as the goddess Ceres, drawn by two lions in a gilded car.

But her advent in Holland was, unhappily, not destined to ensure to her either the power or the abundance with which she was thus gratuitously invested by the pencil of the painter; for on her arrival at the Hague when, in compliance with her entreaty, the Prince of Orange personally solicited her restoration to favour and her return to France, pledging himself in her name that she would never again interfere in the public affairs of the kingdom, nor enter into any cabal either against the state or the

* Siri, vol. viii, p. 639. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 362, 363.

Cardinal-minister, his application was totally disregarded by Louis XIII.; and only elicited an official reply from Richelieu to the effect, "that his Majesty could not receive the said lady and Queen into his realm, inasmuch as he had just reason to fear that she would continue under his name, and perhaps unknown to him, to create factions and cabals, not only in his own kingdom, but in those of his allies; but that should it please the said lady and Queen to retire to Florence, where the malcontents could not exert their influence over her mind, or injure either himself or his allies, his Majesty again offered her, as he had already done, a position at once more honourable and more opulent than that with which she had contented herself in Flanders."*

This answer was, as Richelieu had intended that it should be, perfectly decisive to the Prince, who was aware that Marie de Medicis would have preferred death to a return to the banks of the Arno under her present circumstances; while the so-lately enthusiastic Hollanders, on ascertaining that the French ambassador at the Hague had received orders not to wait upon, or recognise their new guest, began to apprehend that her presence in their country might injure their interests with France; while, at the same time, the great outlay necessary for the maintenance of her establishment alarmed their economy; and it

* Bibliothèque Royale. MSS. de Colbert, entitled "Affaires de France," No. 2, 1638.

was consequently not long ere they respectfully intimated to her Majesty their trust that she would not prolong her sojourn among them.

This was a new outrage upon her dignity which struck to the very soul of the royal exile, who resolved no longer to defer her departure for England; and, accordingly, on the 19th of November she embarked for that country. Still, however, misfortune appeared to pursue her, for the winter proved one of great severity, and she narrowly escaped shipwreck, after having been tempest-tossed for several days. Her reception, nevertheless, compensated for this temporary suffering, as Charles himself travelled in state to Gravesend to escort her to London, where the most magnificent preparations had been made for her accommodation and that of her retinue in St. James's Palace. The fifty apartments which were appropriated to her use had been arranged under the personal superintendence of her daughter Henrietta of England, and were replete with every luxury which could conduce to the well-being of the illustrious exile; while, as if to compensate alike to her persecuted mother and to herself for the tardiness of their meeting (the advanced pregnancy of the English queen having rendered it inexpedient that she should be exposed to the fatigue of travelling), she no sooner ascertained, by the trumpet-blast which announced its appearance, tha he carriage containing her royal consort and his illustrious guest had entered the principal court of the palace, than she hastened,

surrounded by her children, to bid them welcome; and, as her unhappy parent descended from the coach supported on the arm of the King, Henrietta threw herself upon her knees before her, and seizing her hands, pressed them convulsively to her heart, and bathed them with her tears. Marie de Medicis, tutored as she had been in suffering, was scarcely less moved; and thus the meeting between the august mother and daughter was most affecting: Henrietta had so long yearned for the companionship of her kindred, while Marie de Medicis had, on her side, been for so great a period cut off from all the ties of family affection, that as they wept in each other's arms, the one was unable to articulate a welcome, and the other to express her acknowledgments for the warm greeting which she had experienced.

Immediately on her arrival in England, Charles I. awarded to the exiled Queen a pension of a hundred pounds a-day on the civil list; but her advent had, nevertheless, occurred at an inauspicious moment for the English sovereign, whose resources were crippled, and who dared not levy any subsidies upon his subjects in order not to assemble the Parliament; while he moreover dreaded that the presence of his royal mother-in-law, with her numerous train of priests, would tend to exasperate the spirit of the people, who were already greatly excited against the Roman Catholics.

Nor were these his only causes of anxiety, as many of the French malcontents who had fled their country

in order to escape the enmity of Richelieu, had selected London as their place of refuge, relying upon the friendship of Henrietta (a circumstance which had increased the coldness that already existed between the two courts); and these at once rallied round Marie de Medicis as their common centre. Among these illustrious emigrants the most distinguished were the Duchess de Chevreuse, and the Dukes of Soubise and la Valette, all of whom were surrounded by a considerable number of exiles of inferior rank; and as the Queen-mother saw them gathered about her, she easily persuaded herself that their voluntary absence from France was a convincing proof of the general unpopularity of her own arch-enemy, Richelieu. Her personal suite, moreover, included no less than two hundred individuals; and thus the palace of the Stuarts presented the anomalous spectacle of a French court, where the nobles of a hostile land, and the priests of a hostile faith, held undisturbed authority, to the open dissatisfaction of the sturdy citizens of London.

Murmurs were rife on all sides; and the Queen-mother was regarded as a harbinger of misfortune. Henrietta herself was obnoxious to the Puritans, but they had been to a certain degree disarmed by her gentleness of demeanour, and the prudence and policy of her conduct; she was, moreover, the wife of the sovereign, and about to become the mother of a prince; but Marie de Medicis possessed no such claims on their forbearance, and they did not hesitate to attribute to

her views and designs which she was too powerless either to entertain or to attempt.

At this period the Queen-mother was subjected to the mortification of learning that M. de Bellièvre, the ambassador-extraordinary of her son at the court of England, had received stringent instructions to abstain from all demonstration of courtesy towards her person; and even to avoid finding himself in her presence, whenever the etiquette of his position would permit of his absenting himself from the royal circle; a command which he so scrupulously obeyed, that although, in her anxiety to enlist him in her cause, she had more than once endeavoured to address him, she had constantly failed; until Lord Holland, at her entreaty, on one occasion contrived to detain him in the great gallery at Whitehall, where Marie de Medicis entered accompanied by the King and Queen.

As the royal party passed near him, Bellièvre bowed low, without looking towards the mother of his sovereign. Escape was impossible; and he consequently remained silent and motionless.

"Monsieur l'Ambassadeur," said a well-remembered voice; "I wish to exchange a few words with you."

Charles and Henrietta moved on; Lord Holland withdrew; and the Queen-mother at length found herself face to face with the French envoy, who had no alternative but to assume an attitude of profound respect, and to extricate himself from this unexpected difficulty as best he might.

Marie de Medicis was painfully agitated. Her future fate in all probability hinged upon this long-coveted interview, and some seconds elapsed before she could utter a syllable. She continued standing, although her emotion compelled her to lean for support upon a table; and Bellièvre, courtier though he was, could scarcely have looked unmoved upon the wreck of pride and power thus placed before him. Years and sorrows had furrowed the lofty brow, and dimmed the flashing eyes of the once beautiful Tuscan princess, but she still retained all that dignity of deportment for which she was celebrated on her arrival in her adopted country. She was a fugitive and an exile, but she was yet every inch a Queen; and her very misfortunes invested her with an interest which no true and honest heart could fail to feel.

"Sir;" she said at length; "I have for some time past endeavoured by every means in my power to impress upon the Cardinal de Richelieu my earnest desire to return to France by his interposition; but all my attempts have been useless. I have received no reply."

"Madam;" interposed Bellièvre; "I humbly entreat of your Majesty to permit me to explain, that although I have the honour to be the representative of my sovereign at this court, I am not authorised to appear in that character towards yourself. It is possible that your Majesty has the intention of intrusting me with some message, in which case I entreat of you to excuse me

when I decline to undertake its transmission. I have express orders not to interfere in anything connected either with the person or with the concerns of your Majesty."

"You have probably not been forbidden to hear what I desire to say"—exclaimed the Queen, with a burst of her former spirit.

"I confess it, Madam;" conceded the ambassador; "but since I was not commanded to do so, I beg that I may be forgiven should I decline to obey you in the event of your requiring me to make any written communication from yourself to the King my master."

"Enough!" said Marie de Medicis, with a gesture of impatience. "Listen. The afflictions which I have undergone since I took refuge in the Low Countries, have inspired me with very different feelings from those with which I left Compiègne. I beg you to inform the Cardinal that I entreat of him to deliver me from the miserable position in which I now find myself, and from the bitter necessity of soliciting my bread from my sons-in-law. I desire to be once more near the King. I do not ask for either power or authority; all that I require is to pass the remainder of my days in peace, and in preparing myself for death. If the Cardinal cannot obtain the permission of the King for my return to court, let him at least request that I may be allowed to reside in some city within the kingdom, and be restored to the possession of my

revenues. I offer to dismiss from my household all such individuals as may be obnoxious to his Majesty, and to obey him in all things without comment. His orders and the advice of the Cardinal shall regulate my conduct. This is all that I require you to communicate to the latter; as I fear that those to whom I have hitherto addressed myself have been deficient either in courage or in will to perform the errand intrusted to them."

Bellièvre hesitated for a moment. There was a tearful tremour in the voice of the persecuted Princess which it required all his diplomacy to resist; but he soon rallied. "Madam;" he replied calmly; "your Majesty shall have no reason to visit the same reproach on me, for it is with extreme regret that I protest my utter inability to serve you on this occasion."

"I fully comprehend the value of your frankness, M. de Bellièvre;" said the Queen-mother, as she raised herself to her full height, and fixed upon him her dark and searching eyes. "Such is the usual style of ambassadors. They decline to undertake certain commissions, but they nevertheless report all that has taken place. I had experience of that fact more than once during my regency."

Having uttered these biting words, Marie de Medicis turned from the discomfited courtier, and approached the window to which Charles I. and his Queen had retired; followed, however, by Bellièvre.

"Your Majesties must permit me;" he said firmly;

"to repeat in your presence what I have already declared to the mother of my sovereign. I dare not undertake the mission with which she desires to honour me. You will, without doubt, remember, Madam;" he added, turning towards Henrietta, whose emotion was uncontrollable; "that you have on several occasions commanded me to write in your name in behalf of the Queen-mother; and that I have always entreated of your Majesty not to insist on my obedience, in consequence of the stringent orders which I have received to avoid all interference in an affair of which the King my master desires to reserve the exclusive management."

"I do not deny it, Sir;" said Henrietta with dignity; "but since my royal brother will not consent to listen to any solicitations in favour of the Queen my mother, my husband and myself have conceived that the only alternative which remains to her, is to compel an explanation with his ministers, with the participation of the several European courts in which she may see fit to reside."

Again M. de Bellièvre declared his utter inability to meet the wishes of the persecuted Marie; upon which Charles, coldly bending his head to the French envoy, offered a hand to each of the agitated Queens, and led them from the gallery.

Despite all his professions of neutrality, however, Bellièvre, as Marie de Medicis had predicted, lost no time in communicating all the details of the interview

to Richelieu,* who forthwith dictated a private despatch, to which he obtained the signature of Louis, to repulse the demand of the Queen-mother. The Cardinal had passed the rubicon. He could no longer hope that his persecuted benefactress would ever again place confidence in his protestations, or quietly permit him to exert the authority which he had so arrogantly assumed; and thus he readily persuaded the weak monarch—who had, moreover, long ceased to reason upon the will of his all-powerful minister—that the return of the ill-fated Marie to France would be the signal of intestine broil and foreign aggression. In vain did Henrietta of England address letter after letter to her royal brother, representing the evil impression which so prolonged a persecution of their common parent had produced upon the minds of all the European princes; the fiat of Richelieu had gone forth; and the only result obtained by the filial anxiety of the English queen were a series of plausible replies, in which she was complimented upon her good intentions, but at the same time requested not to interfere in the private arrangements of the King her brother.

Desirous, nevertheless, to escape the odium of so unnatural and revolting an abandonment of his royal benefactress, the Cardinal caused a council to be assembled to consider her demand, and to deliberate

* Despatch of Bellièvre of the 29th of December. MSS. Colbert, No. 26.

upon the measures to be adopted in consequence; declaring his own intention to maintain a strict neutrality, and instructing the several members to deliver to him their opinions in writing. All had, however, been previously concerted; before the meeting assembled, Richelieu informed his coadjutors that the King had voluntarily declared that no reliance was to be placed upon the professions of the Queen-mother, as she had on many previous occasions acted with great dissimulation, and that it was not in her nature long to remain satisfied with any place in which she might take up her abode; that she could not make herself happy in France, where she was both powerful and honoured; that she had been constantly discontented in Flanders, although she had adopted that country as her own; that she had lived in perpetual hostility with the Duke d'Orleans after having induced him to quit the kingdom; and that she was even then at variance with the Princess Marguerite, although she had countenanced her marriage with Monsieur in opposition to the will of the sovereign; that she had not gone to Holland without some hostile motive to himself and his kingdom; and that she was already becoming weary of England.

Moreover, as the Cardinal further informed them, Louis XIII. had himself asserted that since her Majesty had failed to content herself with the exalted position which she had at one time filled in France, it was not to be anticipated that she would rest satisfied

with that which, should she return, she must hereafter occupy; but would once more become a rallying point for all the malcontents who were formerly her adherents.*

Thus prompted, the members of the council readily came to the conclusion "that the King could not with safety decide upon the proposition of the Queen-mother until the establishment of a solid peace had placed the intentions of that Princess beyond suspicion, being aware of her intelligence with the enemies of his kingdom; and that, from the same motive, as well as from the apprehension that she might be induced to make an ill use of her revenues, they were of opinion that they should only be restored to her on the condition that she should fix her future residence at Florence."†

This was, as we have already shown, the invariable expedient of Richelieu, who was aware that the prospect of the Queen-mother's return to France was not more repugnant to himself than the idea of retiring in disgrace and dishonour to her birthplace had ever been to his unhappy victim; and the proposal was accordingly repeated at every opportunity, because the minister was aware that it would never be accepted; while it afforded, from its apparent liberality, a pretext for casting the

* MSS. de Bethune, quoted by Capefigue.

† Bazin, vol. iv, p. 130. Le Vassor, vol. ix, pp. 35—40. Capefigue, vol. v, pp. 342—346. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 367—369. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 499—501. Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 352—354.

whole odium of her prolonged exile upon Marie de Medicis herself.

In order to carry out the vast schemes of his ambition, the Cardinal had, at this period, reduced the monarch to a mere cypher in his own kingdom; but he could not, nevertheless, blind himself to the fact that Louis XIII., who was weak rather than wicked, had frequent scruples of conscience, and that during those moments of reflection and remorse, he was easily influenced by those about him; while, whenever this occurred, he evinced a disposition to revolt against the ministerial authority which alarmed the Cardinal, and compelled him to be constantly upon his guard. After having throughout fifteen years successfully struggled against the spread of Calvinism, and that remnant of feudal anarchy which still lingered in France; humbled the house of Austria, his most dreaded rival; and, in order to aggrandise the state he served, sowed the seeds of revolution in every other European nation, and thus compelled their rulers to concentrate all their energies upon themselves, he was now constrained to descend to meaner measures, and to enact the spy upon his sovereign; lest in some unlucky moment, the edifice, which it had cost him so mighty an amount of time and talent to erect, should be overthrown by a breath.

True, Marie de Medicis was an exile and a wanderer; the royal brothers, through his means, alienated in heart; discord and suspicion rife between the monarch and his neglected wife; while even the first passion of

the King's youth had been quenched by his own iron will. The affection of Louis XIII. for Mademoiselle de la Fayette—an affection which did equal honour to both parties from its notorious and unquestioned propriety—but which has been too frequently recorded to require more than a passing allusion, had been crossed and thwarted; the fair maid of honour loved and respected Anne of Austria as much as she feared and loathed the Cardinal-minister; and she was accordingly an obstacle and a stumbling-block to be removed from his path. She also was immured in a cloister, and was consequently no longer dangerous as a rival in the good graces of the King; yet still Richelieu was far from tranquil; and the *petit coucher* of the King was to him a subject of unceasing apprehension. He was well aware that Louis was as unstable as he was distrustful; and thus a new mistress, a new favourite, or even a passing caprice, might, when he was totally unprepared for such an event, suffice to annihilate his best-considered projects.

Poor Marie! Under such circumstances as these all her efforts at conciliation were vain; and it is probable that she would have sunk under the conviction, had not her failing courage been sustained by the affectionate and earnest representations of her daughter, Henrietta of England.

CHAPTER XIII.

[1639—42.]

CHARLES I. DISPATCHES AN ENVOY TO LOUIS XIII. TO NEGOCIATE THE RECAL OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—RICHELIEU ASPIRES TO THE REGENCY —THE EMBASSY FAILS—QUEEN HENRIETTA RESOLVES TO PROCEED IN PERSON TO PARIS—HER VISIT IS DECLINED BY THE FRENCH KING—CHARLES I. RECALS HIS AMBASSADOR FROM THE COURT OF FRANCE—THE INCREASING ANIMOSITY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE AGAINST THE QUEEN-MOTHER COMPELS HER TO SEEK ANOTHER RETREAT—SHE IS REQUESTED BY THE PARLIAMENT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY—PHILIP OF SPAIN REFUSES TO AFFORD HER AN ASYLUM—SHE PROCEEDS TO HOLLAND, AND THENCE TO ANTWERP—THE PAINTER-PRINCE—A VOLUNTARY ENVOY—THE LAST LETTER—MARIE DE MEDICIS IS COMMANDED TO QUIT THE LOW COUNTRIES—SHE TAKES REFUGE AT COLOGNE—THE LAST HOME OF FALLEN ROYALTY — WANING HEALTH OF RICHELIEU—HIS INTELLECTUAL ENERGY — TRIAL OF THE DUKE DE LA VALETTE—TRIAL OF THE DUKE DE VENDÔME—AFFECTED MAGNANIMITY OF THE CARDINAL — SENATORIAL SYCOPHANCY — EXILE OF THE DUKE AND DUCHESS DE VENDÔME—EXECUTION OF M. DE SAINT-PREUIL—CONSPIRACY AGAINST RICHELIEU—THE STOLEN MEETINGS—THE TITLED BEGGAR—SECRET SERVICE—COMPLICITY OF CINQ-MARS DISCOVERED—EXECUTION OF CINQ-MARS AND DE THOU—COWARDICE OF THE DUKE D'ORLEANS—LINGERING HOPES OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—RUBENS AND RICHELIEU—THE ABORTIVE MISSION—RUBENS PROCEEDS TO MADRID—THE KINGS OF ENGLAND AND SPAIN WITHHOLD ALL PECUNIARY AID FROM THE QUEEN-MOTHER — DESPAIR OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—HER UTTER DESTITUTION — DEATH-BED OF A CROWNED HEAD — TARDY HONOURS—FILIAL AFFECTION AND PRIESTLY PIETY—THE VAULTS OF ST DENIS.

CHAPTER XIII.

[1639—42.]

INDIGNANT at the prolonged sufferings of her helpless mother, the gentle wife of Charles I. found little difficulty in inducing her royal husband to dispatch the Earl of Germaine to the court of France, with instructions to use his utmost endeavours to effect a reconciliation; while, in order to render his exertions less onerous, he was enjoined to observe the greatest consideration towards the Cardinal, and to assure him that Marie de Medicis was anxious to owe her success to his good offices alone; and thus to place herself under an obligation which must tend to convince him of her sincere desire to cultivate his regard, and to withdraw herself entirely from all public affairs. Richelieu, however, was as we have shown, little disposed to incur so great a risk; while the birth of a Dauphin had only tended to strengthen his determination to keep her out of the country, as the

declining health of the King had opened up a new channel to his ambition; and he had secretly resolved, should Louis succumb to one of the constantly-recurring attacks of his besetting disease, to cause himself to be proclaimed Regent of the kingdom. This idea, calmly considered, appears monstrous; not only because the monarch had not at this period attained his fortieth year, but also because there existed three individuals who had a more legitimate claim to the coveted dignity than himself — Marie de Medicis, who had already been Regent of France during the minority of her son; Anne of Austria, who was the mother of the future sovereign; and Gaston d'Orleans, who, should the infant-Prince fail to survive, would become his successor. Two of these claimants were, however, as the Cardinal well knew, both suspicious and odious to Louis—the Queen-consort and Monsieur; and he was resolved not to permit the third to return to France while such a casualty was in abeyance, feeling convinced that, in order to revenge her long and bitter sufferings, she would either league with her daughter-in-law and son to traverse his projects; or perhaps, by grasping at the reins of government, and openly opposing his power, not only remove him from office, but even dispossess him of the immense wealth which he had accumulated during his ministry, and make him amenable for the crimes of which he had been guilty.

On his arrival at the court of France, Lord Germaine

hastened to wait upon Richelieu, to whom he delivered a letter from his royal mistress; but even this demonstration of respect failed in its object, as the minister, after having assured himself of the contents of the despatch, referred the envoy to the King himself, declaring that he could not take the initiative in an affair of so much importance to the welfare and tranquillity of the kingdom. The English peer accordingly requested an audience of the monarch; but, as may easily be conceived, he did not obtain it until all had been previously concerted between Louis and his minister; while, to the letter addressed to him by his sister, the Cardinal-ridden King returned the following cold and impracticable reply:

"I have never been wanting in good feeling towards the Queen my mother, but she has so often intrigued against the state, and entered into engagements with my declared enemies, that I cannot come to any determination concerning her until a solid peace with the rest of Europe shall render me less suspicious of her intentions than I am at present."*

In order, however, to render the humiliation of the unfortunate Marie de Medicis still more complete, Richelieu subjoined a note to the British envoy, of which these were the contents:

"If M. Germaine should state that the prospect

* MSS. Colbert, Bibliothèque du Roi.

of peace offers no impediment to granting a supply of money to the Queen-mother, his Majesty may safely reply that he has duly considered the subject, and can do nothing more, as he has no assurance that so long as the war continues, the servants of the Queen his mother, by whom she is guided, may not make an evil use of the generosity of his Majesty against his own interests, and in favour of those of Spain."

Despite the unpromising commencement of his mission, Lord Germaine nevertheless persisted, in obedience to the orders which he had received, in urging the cause of the exiled Queen; but the result of his exertions was a mere repetition of the original objections; coupled moreover with an intimation that until Marie de Medicis had dismissed every member of her household who was obnoxious to the King her son, and had lived for a time out of the country in complete obedience to his will, whatever it might please him to ordain concerning her, he declined all further negociation; with the assurance, however, that when she had submitted to this ordeal, she was at liberty to solicit his renewed commands, and to enjoy her revenues in whatever place of residence he might see fit to allot to her for the future.

The total want of justice and generosity evinced by this reply revolted Henrietta; who was aware that, in order to conciliate Richelieu, the Queen-mother

had deprived herself of the services of Chanteloupe and the Abbé de St. Germain, both of whom she had left at Brussels, although, unlike Gaston d'Orleans, she was incapable of sacrificing them to her own interests; and, satisfied that no envoy, however zealous, could cope with the influence of the Cardinal, she accordingly resolved to plead the cause of her persecuted mother in person. In pursuance of this determination the English queen, whose health had suffered from her recent confinement, availed herself of the circumstance to solicit the permission of her brother to pass a short time at his court, in order to test the influence of her native air; but Richelieu, who suspected her real motive, induced his sovereign to delay any reply until the summer was considerably advanced; and finally to inform her that he was about to proceed to the frontier, and could not consequently have the happiness of bidding her welcome.

Indignant at so marked a want of respect, Charles I. immediately recalled the Earl of Leicester and Lord Scudamore, who were at that period his representatives at the court of France, with stringent orders not to receive any present from Louis XIII. on their departure; while Richelieu, as he returned their parting compliments, secretly resolved that in order to prevent a league between the English sovereign and Philip of Spain in favour of the Queen-mother, he would leave no measure untried to foment the intestine troubles of England, and to increase those of Scotland,

and so compel Charles to confine his attention to his own immediate dominions.*

The refusal of Louis XIII. to permit the return of his mother to France created great excitement throughout England; but, unhappily, both herself and her daughter were obnoxious to the Puritan party, who were in open revolt against the royal authority; and meanwhile Charles I. in arms against his subjects, crippled in his resources, and deprived of the support of his Parliament, was totally unable to enforce his rights. Day by day his own position became more precarious; he was accused of a tendency towards Romanism, and upbraided with an undue submission to the principles and feelings of a wife to whom he was tenderly attached; but who was regarded by the sectarians with loathing; while, on the other hand, the court of France considered itself aggrieved, not only by his refusal to enter into an aggressive alliance against Spain, but also by the hospitality which he had accorded to the unfortunate Marie de Medicis; and by his refusal to accede to the dismemberment of the Low Countries.

It is, however, beyond our purpose to dwell upon the intestine troubles of England at this period; and it must consequently suffice that the Queen-mother—painfully aware how greatly her presence in London added to the difficulties of her royal son-in-law, and

* Le Vassor, vol. ix, pp. 121—125. Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 352—357. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 500, 501.

excited the animosity of the Cardinal, whose agents were actively exasperating the spirit of the people against their sovereign — was unwearied in her efforts at conciliation, all of which, as they had previously done, proved ineffectual; and thus month succeeded month; and as the disaffection grew stronger throughout the realm of Great Britain, and the animosity of the populace against herself, her daughter, and all who professed their faith, became more undisguised, she was compelled to admit to herself, that not even the affection of Henrietta could longer afford her a refuge.

The decapitation of the Duke de la Valette, and the death of the Count de Soissons had rendered the Cardinal-minister more powerful than ever; while Gaston d'Orleans had, since the birth of the Dauphin, withdrawn himself from the court; and although he still conspired, he did so timidly, as though prematurely assured of defeat; and thus no hope remained to her of a return to France, while she felt that her longer residence in England was impossible.

Yet still she lingered on, endeavouring by the inoffensiveness of her deportment to disarm the animosity of the people, and enduring not only menaces but even insult;* being ignorant in what direction to turn her steps, lest she should throw herself into the power of her arch-enemy. Her

* Hume, vol. v, p. 25.

proud heart was bruised; her great name had become a by-word and a scorn; the wife and the mother of kings, before whose frown the high-born and the powerful had once shrunk, sat shivering in the vast saloons of a foreign palace, crouching beneath the hoarse cries of a hostile multitude, and quailing in terror at their coarse threatenings.

During the popular commotion induced by the impeachment of the Earl of Strafford, in 1640, the mob, equally incensed against the Romanists, collected about St. James's Palace, and vociferated the most formidable menaces against the priests who had accompanied the Queen-mother from Flanders; while in a short time the numbers augmented so formidably as to create great alarm for her personal safety. The Earl of Holland, Lord-Lieutenant of Middlesex, to whose vigilance she had been confided, together with her household, immediately ordered out a hundred musqueteers to guard her; but many of these obeyed the command reluctantly, declaring that they could find better employment than watching over foreigners. Startled by this demonstration, Lord Holland laid the case before the House of Peers (the royal authority being no longer recognised), and generously represented the indignity of such an insult to so great a Princess, who had moreover thrown herself upon the hospitality of the nation, to which she was so nearly allied; urging them to avert the reproach which must inevitably fall upon the country should the

misguided zeal of the people be permitted to subject the exiled Queen to violence, when her rank, her misfortunes, and her age should alike render her person sacred.

The Peers referred the remonstrance to the Commons, who at once agreed to the necessity of affording protection to the Queen-mother; but, urged by the agents of Richelieu, they at the same time suggested that she should be desired to depart the kingdom; "for the quieting those jealousies in the hearts of his Majesty's well-affected subjects, occasioned by some ill instruments about the Queen's person, by the flowing of priests and Papists to her house, and by the use and practice of the idolatry of the mass, and exercise of other superstitious services of the Romish Church, to the great scandal of true religion."*

Unable to oppose the will of his Parliament, Charles I. had no alternative save to request his unhappy mother-in-law to pardon him if he entreated her to seek another asylum, while Marie de Medicis on her side, compelled to obey this intimation, promised to comply without delay; only imploring him to exert his influence with Philip of Spain to receive her once more in his dominions; or, failing that concession, to permit her to pass through the Low Countries into Holland. Philip, however, affecting

* Rushworth, vol. v, p. 267.

great displeasure at the manner in which she had left Brussels, refused to concede either favour; upon which the persecuted Princess applied to the States-General of the United Provinces to afford her an asylum; and solicited the Prince of Orange (whose son had recently married her grand-daughter) to second her request. Both the States-General and Frederic Henry, however, stood too much in awe of Richelieu to venture thus to brave his displeasure; and, accordingly, they also, in their turn, requested the Queen-mother to select another retreat.

The iron hand of the Cardinal still pressed upon his victim. Abandoned by her children, and by the ancient allies of the King her husband; forsaken by her friends, and almost forgotten by her enemies, the wretched Marie de Medicis found herself literally bereft of all support, and at length, hopeless and heart-stricken, she took leave of her afflicted daughter, who was fated only a few years later to become like herself dependent upon the reluctant hospitality of her relatives; and of her son-in-law, so soon to expiate the errors of his government upon a scaffold; and in the month of August, 1641, she quitted the court of London, under the escort of the Marquis of Arundel, and proceeded to Holland, where the States-General informed her on her landing that the country was so much impoverished by the long war which it had sustained, that they were unable to provide funds for her maintenance.

The English Parliament had not, however, suffered

her to leave their shores entirely destitute, but had voted the sum of three thousand pounds for her immediate expenses, pledging themselves moreover to supply twice that amount at given periods.* On her arrival in Holland Lord Arundel received her final commands, and returned to report her safe passage to her daughter Henrietta; while she herself, attended only by a few attached followers, painfully pursued her way to Antwerp, where she resolved, despite the prohibition of the government, to take up her temporary abode in the house of Rubens, and to remain in perfect seclusion. The unfortunate and desolate Queen felt that she should not experience such utter isolation while she could hold communion with one true and loyal heart; and the past zeal of the artist-prince in her service convinced her that from him she should still receive a welcome.

How does destiny at times mock human greatness, and reverse all social rules! Here was a sovereign Princess, the wife and the mother of kings, who after eighteen weary years of struggle and suffering, was about to solicit from the man whom, in 1622, she had invited to Paris, and upon whom she had lavished both riches and honour, in order that he might perpetuate with his brilliant pencil the short-lived triumphs of her regency, a shelter for her grey hairs. Nor was she, in this instance, fated to disappointment, as her reception

* Le Vassor, vol. x, pp. 591, 592. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 457, 458. Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 495, 496. Rambure, MS. Mém., vol. xix, p. 518.

by the great painter was as earnest and as respectful as though she still swayed the destinies of France.

As Rubens knelt before her, and pressed her thin hand reverently to his lips, the eyes of Marie de Medicis brightened, and a faint colour rose to her wasted cheeks. For a time she forgot all her sufferings; and they talked together of the proud period of her power, when she had laboured to embellish her beloved city of Paris, and summoned Rubens to the Luxembourg to execute the magnificent series of pictures which formed its noblest ornament; but this happy oblivion could not long endure, and scarcely an hour had elapsed ere they were engaged in concerting new measures to effect her recal to France.

For several weeks the presence of the Queen-mother in Antwerp was not suspected, and during that brief interval of comparative repose not a day passed in which the subject was not earnestly discussed; until at length Rubens, who was aware that the retreat of his royal guest must be ultimately discovered, resolved to undertake in person the mission of peace in which so many others had previously failed.

"Suffer me, Madam;" said the painter; "to proceed without delay to Paris charged with a letter from your Majesty to the King your son. The pretext for my journey shall be my desire to execute a portrait of my friend, the Baron de Vicq, our ambassador at the French court; and as I do not doubt that his Christian Majesty will honour me with a summons to his pre-

sence, I will then deliver your despatch into his own hands. The happy results of my former missions render me sanguine of success on this occasion; while I pledge myself that should I unfortunately fail in my attempt to awaken the affection of the King towards your Majesty, it shall be from no want of zeal or perseverance in your cause."

"My noble Maestro!" exclaimed Marie de Medicis; "I would with confidence trust my life in your hands. My sorrows have at least not alienated your generous heart: and there still remains one being upon earth who can be faithful when my gratitude is all that I can offer in return. Listen to me, Rubens. Even yet I am convinced that Louis loves me; a conviction which is shared by Richelieu; and therefore it is that he condemns me to exile. He fears my influence over the mind of the King my son, and has injured me too deeply to place any faith in my forgiveness. Our mutual struggle has extended over long years, and I have become its victim. Yet would I fain make another effort. I am old and heart-broken, and I pine to terminate my wretched existence on the soil of France. Surely this is not too much to ask, and more I will not seek to obtain. You were born under a fortunate constellation, Pietro Paulo; and I have confidence in your success. Go then, and may God guide and prosper you: but — beware of the Cardinal!"

"Fear not, Madam;" said the painter, as he rose

from his knee, and placed writing materials before the agitated Queen. "In so righteous a cause I shall be protected; but as further delay might prove fatal to our hopes, I would venture to implore your Majesty to lose no time in preparing the despatch of which I am to be the bearer."

"It shall be done;" replied Marie, forcing a painful smile. "It will in all probability be my last appeal; for should you fail, Rubens, I shall feel that all is indeed lost!"

The artist bowed profoundly, and left the room in order to give the necessary orders for his immediate departure; while his royal guest seized a pen, and with a trembling hand, and in almost illegible characters, wrote the following affecting letter:

"Sire,

"During many years I have been deprived of your dear presence, and have implored your clemency without any reply. God and the Holy Virgin are my witnesses that my greatest suffering throughout that period has proceeded less from exile, poverty, and humiliation, than from the estrangement of a son, and the loss of his dear presence. Meanwhile I am becoming aged, and feel that each succeeding hour is bringing me more rapidly to the grave. Thus, Sire, would it not be a cruel and an unnatural thing, that a mother should expire without having once more seen her beloved son; without having heard one word of con-

solation from his lips; without having obtained his pardon for the involuntary wrongs of which she may have been guilty towards him? I do not ask of you, Sire, to return to France as a powerful Queen; should such be your good pleasure, I will not even appear again at court, and will finish my life in any obscure town which you may see fit to select as my residence; but, in the name of God and all the Saints, I adjure you not to allow me to die out of the kingdom of France; or to suffer me any longer to drag my sorrows and my misery from one foreign city to another; for you are not aware, Sire, that the widow of Henry IV., and the mother of the reigning monarch of France and Navarre Louis XIII., will soon be without a roof to shelter her head, and a little bread for her support! You are not aware, Sire, that if the hour of my death were now to strike, no one would be beside me to close my eyes, and to say, 'This is the body of Marie de Medicis.' Take then compassion on my very humble request, Sire; and receive, whatever may be your decision, the blessings of your mother.

"In the city of Antwerp, the ninth day of October of the year of our salvation MDCXLI.

"I, the Queen-mother,

"MARIE."

As the painter-prince returned to the apartment, the Queen placed this letter in his hands; and glancing at his travelling-garb, said in a faltering voice: "So

soon, Maestro? But you are right, and I may the earlier look for your return."

Alas! once more the persecuted Princess suffered her sanguine temperament to delude her into hope; but by one of those singular coincidences which appear almost fabulous, Rubens had scarcely taken leave of his family, and was about to enter the carriage that awaited him, when a courier in the livery of the Governor of the Low Countries galloped into the yard, and demanded to be ushered into the presence of the Queen. Startled and alarmed by so unexpected an apparition, Rubens had no alternative but to obey; and the messenger no sooner found himself standing before Marie de Medicis, than, with a profound inclination, he placed a letter in her hands, and with a second salutation retired.

The Queen-mother hastily tore open the packet, of which these were the contents;

"Madame la Reine,

"We hereby inform you that the city of Antwerp cannot afford you a befitting asylum, and that you would do better to take up your residence at Cologne.

"Upon which, we pray God to keep you under His holy and efficient guard.

"I, the Governor of the Low Countries,

"DON FRANCISCO DE MELLO."*

* In 1634 after the demise of the Marquis d'Ayetona, Philip of Spain conferred upon his brother Ferdinand, Cardinal-Archbishop

Marie de Medicis sank back upon her seat, and silently held the insulting letter towards Rubens.

"There is indeed no time to lose, Madam;" exclaimed the artist, as he glanced rapidly over its contents. "The spies of the Cardinal have tracked you hither, and you must quit Flanders without delay. Dare I hope that, in this emergency, your Majesty will deign to occupy a house which I possess at Cologne, until my return from Paris?"

"Rubens, you are my preserver!" faltered out the wretched Queen. "Do with me as you will. You will meet your recompense in Heaven."

A few hours subsequently two carriages drove from the court-yard of Rubens; the first contained Marie de Medicis and two of her ladies, and took the way to Cologne; while the second, which was occupied by Rubens, drove towards Paris.

On the 12th of October the Queen-mother reached her final resting-place, and received permission to reside within the city; but this was the only concession accorded to her; and in one of the most ancient and

of Toledo, the appointment of Governor-General of the Netherlands, which he held until his death, which took place at Brussels on the 9th of November, 1641, when he was succeeded by Don Francisco de Mello, a nobleman who had rendered himself conspicuous by defeating the Maréchal de Guiche at Hannecourt. Subsequently, however, de Mello tarnished his military reputation at the famous battle of Rocroy, where he was utterly worsted by the young Duke d'Enghien, who had only just attained his twenty-first year, and who was afterwards known as the Great Condé.

gloomy streets in the immediate vicinity of the Cloth-market and the church of Sainte Marguerite, she took possession of a Gothic house in which the greatest genius of the Flemish school had first seen the light. The room in which Rubens was born had been reverently preserved in all its original comfort by his family, and this apartment became the personal chamber of the Queen; who, for a time, sanguine as to the result of the painter's mission, and rendered doubly hopeful by the constant reports which reached her of the rapidly-declining health of Richelieu, supported her new misfortunes with courage.

Unfortunately, however, for his victim, it was only physical suffering by which the Cardinal was prostrated, for never had his mental powers appeared more clear or more acute, or his iron will more indomitable, than at this period, when a slow but painful disease was gradually wearing away his existence; while superadded to this marvellous strength and freshness of intellect—marvellous inasmuch as that it triumphantly resisted both corporeal agony and the conception of all those rapidly-recurring and conflicting political combinations by which he had excited alike the wonder and mistrust of every European state—his irritation and impatience under the restraint enforced upon him by his bodily ailments rendered him a more formidable enemy than ever. Prematurely old, ruined in constitution, ever dreading the knife of the assassin and the pen of the satirist, greedy of gold and power, wrapping himself

lovingly in the purple and fine linen of earth, while conscious that ere long the sumptuous draperies of pride must be exchanged for a winding-sheet, Richelieu looked with a jaundiced eye on all about him, and appeared to derive solace and gratification only from the sufferings of others. He had pursued the unfortunate Duke de la Valette with his hatred until the Parliament, composed almost entirely of the creatures of his will and the slaves of his passions, had condemned to death the representative of the proud race of Epernon; and he had no sooner accomplished this object than, emboldened by his fatal success, he next ventured to fly his falcon at a still nobler quarry; and he accordingly accused one of the natural sons of Henry IV., the Duke de Vendôme, of conspiring against his life. As, however, the Prince was not within his grasp, and that his condemnation could not consequently involve the loss of life, he contented himself by causing him to be declared guilty *par contumace*, and by subsequently making a display of affected generosity, and soliciting his pardon.

"Had he," said the Cardinal, in his wiry and peculiar tone, which was broken at intervals by a hoarse and hollow cough; "Had he conspired against the sovereign or against the state, my duty as a minister, and my devotion as a subject, would have compelled me on this occasion to remain silent; but it was against my person alone that M. de Vendôme threatened

violence, and I can forgive a crime which extended no further."

Great was the wonder, and still greater the admiration, expressed by the time-serving sycophants to whom he addressed himself. The several members of the council argued and remonstrated, assuring his Eminence that he owed it to himself to let justice take its course; and entreating that he would not endeavour to influence the sovereign on so serious an occasion, where his generous self-abnegation might involve his future safety; but Richelieu only replied with one of his ambiguous smiles that he could not, in order to save his own life, consent to sacrifice that of a prince of the blood; while at the same time he induced the King to exile the Duchess de Vendôme, and her two sons, MM. de Mercœur and de Besançon from the capital. The members of the court by which the Duke had been tried and condemned, were then commanded to meet at an early hour in the morning on the 22nd of March at St. Germain-en-Laye, where Louis XIII. presided over the assembly in person; and they had scarcely taken their seats when it was announced to the King that Le Clerc, the secretary of the Cardinal-minister, awaited in the ante-room the royal permission to deliver to the Chancellor a letter of which he was the bearer. His entrance having been sanctioned by the sovereign, Le Clerc placed his despatches in the hands of Seguier, who hastily cut the silk by which

they were secured, and he had no sooner made himself acquainted with their contents than he addressed a few words in a suppressed voice to the King.

"Gentlemen;" said Louis, as the Chancellor fell back into his seat; "His Eminence the Cardinal de Richelieu is desirous that I should pardon M. de Vendôme; but such is not my own opinion; I owe my protection to those who, like M. le Cardinal, have served me with affection and fidelity; and were I not to punish all attempts against his life, I should experience great difficulty in finding ministers who would transact public business with the same courage and devotion as my cousin of Richelieu has done. M. le Cardinal eagerly demands a free pardon for the Duke de Vendôme; but no, no; I will not concede that pardon at present; I will merely suspend the trial; and that measure will, believe me, prove the most efficient one to hold in check so impetuous a character as his. Nevertheless, read the letter aloud;" he added; "that the court may have full cognisance of every circumstance connected with this unhappy affair."

Seguier, after a profound obeisance to the sovereign, once more unfolded the packet, of which these were the contents:

"Monsieur le Chancelier, the interests of the state having ever been the sole object of my attention and anxiety, I consider that the public will not be in any way benefitted by a knowledge of the evil design of M. le Duc de Vendôme; and thus I have thought that

I might, without any prejudice to the royal service, implore of his Majesty to pardon M. de Vendôme."

Once more did the well-acted generosity and self-abnegation of the wily Cardinal excite an universal and enthusiastic murmur of admiration; while one of the council, anxious to exhibit his attachment to the person of Richelieu in the presence of the King, even carried his sycophancy so far as to exclaim: "What a noble spirit! I propose that the letter to which we have just listened should be inscribed on the parliamentary register in order that it may descend to posterity." No answering voice, however, seconded the proposition; for few who were present at this extraodinary scene, and who remembered that the relatives of the accused Prince had been driven from Paris at the instigation of the Cardinal, doubted for an instant that they were actors in a preconcerted drama, and they consequently remained silent, until the King, after having glanced rapidly over the assembly, rose from his seat, and said somewhat impatiently: "Gentlemen, you may retire."

Such was the abrupt and indefinite termination of a trial which had, as Richelieu intended that it should do, convulsed the whole aristocracy of France. The son of Henry IV. could not again set his foot upon the soil of that kingdom which counted him among its princes save at the risk of his life; while his unoffending wife and sons were banished to a distance from the capital which was their legitimate sphere of action, and branded as the relatives of a conspirator.

The next victim of the inexorable Cardinal was M. de Saint-Preuil, the Governor of Arras, who had fought valiantly against the Spaniards, and in whom the King had evinced the greatest confidence. Accused upon some frivolous pretext—although M. de Saint-Preuil had been assured by Louis himself that he was at perfect liberty to exercise his authority within the limits of his government as he should see fit, without being amenable to any other individual — he was arrested, tried, and executed, despite the desire of the weak monarch to turn aside the iron hand by which he had been clutched. In this instance the vindictive minister could afford to satiate his hatred, and even to give to his merciless vengeance a semblance of patriotism, for here at least his own safety or interests were not involved; and thus to all the representations of his royal master, he replied by lamenting that he dare not overlook the commission of crime, while the welfare of a great nation and the safety of its sovereign were confided to his care. It was no part of Richelieu's policy to tolerate any individual, however inferior to himself in rank and station, who ventured to place himself beyond the pale of his own jealous authority; and thus the overstrained indulgence of the King to a brave and successful soldier had signed his death-warrant.

Still did the fatal disease which was preying upon the vitals of the Cardinal silently work its insidious way, and reveal its baneful power by sleepless nights, burning fever, and sharp bodily pain; but his powerful mind

and insatiable ambition enabled him to strive successfully against these enervating influences; and Saint-Preuil was scarcely laid in his dishonoured grave ere the remorseless minister sought around him for more victims. The Count de Soissons, who had been exiled from the court for resenting the arrogance of the Cardinal, had found an asylum with the Duke de Bouillon at Sedan,* where it had, after considerable difficulty, been conceded that he should be permitted to remain unmolested for the space of four years, after which time he was to remove to some other residence selected by the King, or in point of fact, by Richelieu himself. The period named had now expired; and the Cardinal, anxious still further to humiliate the great nobles, to whom, as he was bitterly aware, his own obscure extraction was continually matter of contemptuous comment, exacted from the timid and yielding monarch, that he should forthwith issue his commands to M. de Bouillon to deliver up his cousin de Soissons to the keeping of his Majesty; or that both princes should humbly ask forgiveness of the Cardinal-minister for the affronts which they had put upon him.

The receipt of this offensive order at once determined the conduct of the two friends. That the Count de Soissons, a member of the haughty house of Condé, and the Duke de Bouillon, the independent sovereign of Sedan, both princes of the blood, should condescend

* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 540.

to bend the knee, and to entreat the clemency of Armand du-Plessis, was an extent of humiliation which neither the one nor the other could be brought to contemplate for an instant; and thus it was instantly decided between them that they would resist the mandate of the King even to the death; while their opposition was strengthened by the impetuous vituperations of the young Duke de Guise; who had, after a misunderstanding with the minister, also claimed the hospitality of M. de Bouillon, and who welcomed with enthusiasm so favourable an opportunity of revenging himself upon his adversary.

The animosity of M. de Guise had grown out of his jealousy, which had been excited by the ostentatious attentions paid by Richelieu to the Princess Gonzaga de Nevers, to whom he was himself tenderly attached, and who was, moreover, the idol of the whole court. Eagerly, therefore, did he enter into the views of his aggrieved associates; and, as their determination to resist the presumption of the haughty minister necessarily involved precautionary measures of no ordinary character, they lost no time in dispatching a secret messenger to solicit the support of the Archduke and the Spanish agents. With Don Miguel of Salamanca they found little difficulty in concluding a treaty; and this desirable object attained, they effected a second with the court of Vienna; while Jean François Paul de Gondy, who subsequently became celebrated during the Fronde, as the Cardinal de

Retz, was instructed to apprise their friends in Paris of the contemplated revolt, and to urge their co-operation. The Duke de Guise meanwhile proceeded to Liége, in order to levy troops for the reinforcement of the rebel army; the several envoys having been instructed to declare that the princes were still devoted to their sovereign, and that they merely took up arms to protect themselves against the violence and perfidy of the Cardinal-minister. Anxious to strengthen their faction at home, Soissons, confiding in the frequent professions of attachment which had been lavished upon him by Gaston d'Orleans, wrote to that Prince to explain their motives and purposes, and to engage him to join in the conspiracy. For once, however, Monsieur, much as he delighted in feuds and factions, declined to take any part in their meditated resistance to the ministerial authority, his own position having been rendered so brilliant through the policy of the Cardinal that he feared to sacrifice the advantages thus tardily secured; while, moreover, not satisfied with returning evasive answers to M. de Soissons, which induced that Prince to pursue the correspondence under the belief that his arguments would ultimately induce Monsieur to join their party, he had the baseness, in order to further his personal interests with the all-powerful minister, to communicate to him the several letters of the Count immediately that they reached him.

Irritated by the contemptuous epithets applied to him

in these unguarded epistles, and anxious to avert a danger which the delay of every succeeding hour tended to render still more threatening, Richelieu determined at once to attack the stronghold of his enemies; and an army under the command of the Maréchal de Châtillon was accordingly dispatched against Sedan. The result of the expedition proved, however, inimical to the interest of the Cardinal, as the royal general was utterly defeated, and more than two thousand of the King's troops, together with the artillery and the treasure-chest, fell into the hands of the rebels. The battle, fatal as it was in the aggregate, nevertheless afforded one signal triumph to Richelieu in the death of the Count de Soissons, who was killed by the pistol-ball of a gendarme, to whom, as a recompense for the murder of his kinsman, Louis XIII. accorded both a government and a pension. Dispirited by the fate of the young Prince, to whom he was tenderly attached, Bouillon attempted no further resistance, but tendered without delay his submission to the sovereign, and received in return a free pardon, together with all those individuals who had joined his banner, save the Duke de Guise, who, not having been included in the treaty, was condemned *par contumace*.*

This result, so strongly opposed to the ordinarily-severe policy of Richelieu, was not, as must at once

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 541, 542. Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 496—519. Aubery, vol. ii, p. 736. Siri, vol. ii, p. 15.

be apparent, obtained through his influence. Powerful as he was through the King's sense of his own helplessness, he had been throughout the whole of his ministerial career thwarted at times by the ruling favourites of Louis, whose puerile tastes rendered him as dependent upon others for mere amusement as he was for assistance and support in the government of his kingdom. We have already seen the projects of the haughty Cardinal at times traversed by the equally arrogant and ambitious de Luynes, who was succeeded in the favour and intimacy of the sovereign by M. de Saint-Simon,* from whom the minister experienced equal annoyance; while the platonic attachment of the King for Mademoiselle de Hautefort, whose energetic habits and far-sighted judgment had involved him in still greater difficulty, determined him to select such a companion for Louis, as while he ministered to the idleness and *ennui* of his royal master, should at the same time subserve his own interests. To this end, Richelieu, after mature deliberation, selected as the new favourite a page named Cinq-Mars,† whose extraordinarily handsome person and exuberant spirits could

* Claude de Rouvroy, Sieur de Saint-Simon, was the descendant of a family of Vermandois in Picardy. His relative Isaac de Rouvroy resigned in his favour (in 1635) the paternal estate, which, when he became the favourite of Louis XIII., that monarch erected into a duchy in his favour.

† Henry Coiffier, Ruzé-d'Effiat, Marquis de Cinq-Mars, was the second son of Antoine Coiffier, Marquis d'Effiat, Marshal of France.

not fail, as he rightly imagined, to attract the fancy and enliven the leisure of the moody sovereign.

This young noble, who was the son of an old and tried friend of the Cardinal, had appeared at court under his auspices, and consequently regarded him as the patron of his future fortunes; a conviction which tended to give to the relative position of the parties a peculiar and confidential character well-suited to the views of the astute minister. Cinq-Mars, like all youths of his age, was dazzled by the brilliancy of the court, and eager for advancement; while he was at the same time reckless, unscrupulous, and even morbidly ambitious; but these defects were concealed beneath an exterior so prepossessing, manners so specious, and acquirements so fascinating; there was such a glow and glitter in his scintillating wit and uncontrollable gaiety, that few cared to look beyond the surface, and all were loud in their admiration of the handsome and accomplished page.

Such was the tool selected by Richelieu to fashion out his purposes, and he found a ready and a willing listener in the son of his friend, when, with warm protestations of his value for his father and his attachment to himself, he declared his intention of placing the ardent youth about the person of his sovereign under certain conditions, which were at once accepted by Cinq-Mars. These conditions, divested of the courtly shape in which they were presented to his

protégé, were simply that while the page devoted himself to the amusement of his royal master, he should carefully report to the Cardinal, not only the actions of the King, but also the private conversations which might take place in his presence, and the share maintained by the sovereign in each.

Had Cinq-Mars been less aspiring than he was, it is probable that although yet a mere youth he would have shrunk with disgust from so humiliating a proposition; but he remembered the career of de Luynes, and he disregarded in the greatness of the end the unworthiness of the means by which it was to be obtained. The brilliant page was accordingly presented to the unsuspicious monarch by the minister, and, as the latter had anticipated, at once captivated the fancy of Louis, who having satisfied himself that Cinq-Mars possessed a sufficient knowledge of those sports in which he himself delighted, at once consented to receive him into his household.

For a time the page served with equal assiduity both the King and the Cardinal, to the former of whom he so soon rendered himself essential, that although the confidential friends of Louis were occasionally startled to find their most secret words known to the minister, and did not scruple to express their suspicion that they were betrayed by Cinq-Mars, Louis, too indolent and too selfish to risk the displeasure of Richelieu, or to deprive himself of an agreeable associate, merely

laughed at the absurdity of such a supposition, and continued to treat the page with the same confidence and condescension as heretofore.

Gradually did Cinq-Mars meanwhile weary of the complicated *rôle* which he was called upon to perform. He saw the health of the Cardinal failing day by day; and he detected, from the querulous complaints in which Louis constantly indulged against his imperious minister, that although he was feared by his sovereign there was no tie of affection between them. At this period the young courtier began for the first time to reflect; and the result of his reflections was to free himself unostentatiously and gradually, but nevertheless surely, from the thrall of his first patron. This resolution, however, was one which it required more tact and self-government than he yet possessed to reduce to practice, and accordingly the quick eye of Richelieu soon detected in the decreased respect of his bearing, and the scantiness of his communications, the nature of the feelings by which he was actuated.

Nevertheless, the minister was conscious of one advantage over the self-centred monarch of which he resolved to avail himself in order to fix the wavering fidelity of the page. Louis, while jealous of the devotion of those about him, was careless in recompensing their services; while Richelieu, with a more intimate knowledge of human nature, and, above all, of the nature of courts, deemed no sacrifice too great which insured the stability of his influence, and the

fidelity of his adherents. Thus, affecting not to remark the off-falling of affection in his agent, he intermingled his discourse to the ambitious young man with regrets that the monarch had not rewarded his zeal by some appointment in the royal household which would give him a more defined position than that which he then held. This was a subject which never wearied the attention of Cinq-Mars, who with flashing eyes and a heightened colour listened eagerly; and the Cardinal no sooner perceived that by his *quasi*-condolences he had regained in a great degree his former influence, than he bade the page serve him faithfully, and that he would himself atone for the negligence of the King. Nor was the promise an idle one, as within the short space of two years, he caused the new favourite to be appointed both master of the wardrobe and grand-equerry.

This promotion proved, however, too rapid for the vanity of Cinq-Mars; who no sooner saw himself in a position so brilliant as to excite the envy of half the court than, with a self-confidence fatal to the interests of Richelieu, he once more sought deliverance from the yoke of his priest-patron, and devoted himself so earnestly to the service of Louis that ere long the King found his companionship indispensable. When by chance he absented himself for a few hours from Fontainebleau, in order to exchange the monotony of that palace for the dissipation of the capital, the King no sooner became aware of the fact than after having

impatiently reiterated more than once: "Cinq-Mars! Where is Cinq-Mars?" he dispatched a courier to Paris to recal him; and the pleasure-loving young man was compelled to return upon the instant to attend his royal master in a stag-hunt, or to parade his satins and velvets among the hounds whom Louis delighted to feed and fondle; until he began to be weary of the honours which he had so lately coveted, and to sigh for an unrestrained intercourse with his former associates.

With still less patience, however, did he endure the imperious chidings of the Cardinal, who could not brook that one who owed his advancement to his favour should seek to emancipate himself from his control; and the spoiled child of fortune, when he occasionally passed from the perfumed boudoir of some haughty court-beauty by whom he had been flattered and carressed, to the closet of the minister where he was greeted by a stern brow and the exclamation of "Cinq-Mars, Cinq-Mars, you are forgetting yourself!" found considerable difficulty in controlling his impetuosity; but it was even worse when to this rebuke Richelieu at times added in a contemptuous tone: "Remember to whom you owe your fortune, and that it will be quite as easy for me to divest you of the high-sounding titles which have turned your brain as it was to procure them for you. Be warned, therefore; for if you do not conduct yourself with more propriety, and evince more respect for my authority, I will have you turned out of the palace like a lacquey."

The constant repetition of these taunts made the impetuous blood of the haughty youth boil in his veins; while the lingering remnant of affection which he had hitherto retained for the friend of his father and his own benefactor became gradually changed to hate, and impelled him to redouble his zeal about the person of the sovereign, in order that he might one day secure sufficient influence over his mind to enable him to revenge the insults offered to his pride.

At this precise period Cinq-Mars—who, had he not been brought into close contact with a more matured and stronger mind than his own, would in all probability have frittered away his vengeance in petty and puerile annoyances which would rather have worried than alarmed the Cardinal—formed a fast friendship with François Auguste de Thou, who had long ceased to conceal his hatred of the minister. In the study of his father the celebrated historian, M. de Thou had learned to feel an innate contempt for all constituted authorities, even while he professed to be at once Catholic, royalist, and patriot; but, unlike his father, the young scholar was not satisfied by theories; he required active employment for the extraordinary energies with which he was gifted; and abandoning the literary leisure in which the elder de Thou so much delighted, he became in early manhood commissary of the army of the Cardinal de la Valette during his Italian campaign, and subsequently he was appointed councillor of state, and

principal librarian to the King. With his peculiar principles, de Thou could not do otherwise than deprecate and detest the overwhelming power of Richelieu; and long ere he crossed the path of Cinq-Mars, he had entered into several cabals against the minister, a fact which had no sooner been ascertained by the Cardinal than he deprived him of his public offices, and thus rendered his animosity more resolute than ever. It was in this temper of mind that de Thou met the grand-equerry; nor was it long ere the wild visions of Cinq-Mars' passion were fashioned into probability by the logical arguments of his new acquaintance; a circumstance of which he no sooner became convinced than he forthwith resolved not to suffer his indignation to vent itself in mere annoyance, but to seek some more noble and enduring vengeance.

Thenceforward the two friends became inseparable; and when de Thou at length hinted that Cinq-Mars would in all probability, from his great favour with the sovereign, become the successor of Richelieu in the event of his dismissal, the former sprang at once from a peevish and mortified boy into a resolute and daring conspirator, and his first care was to secure the co-operation of his kinsman the Duke de Bouillon; who, while auguring favourably of the plot, and pledging himself to strengthen it by his own participation, represented to his young relative the absolute necessity of obtaining the support of Monsieur.

Gaston had withdrawn from the court after the

birth of the two princes; and although he had, with his usual pusillanimity, continued to preserve an apparently good understanding with the Cardinal, few were deceived into the belief that this ostensible oblivion of the past was genuine. Monsieur was, when the subject of the new cabal against Richelieu was mooted to him by Cinq-Mars, residing in the Luxembourg (known at that period as the Palais d'Orleans), whither the grand-equerry was accustomed to repair in disguise, and generally during the night, to concert with the Prince all the preliminaries of the conspiracy. Gaston, as had been anticipated, evinced no indisposition to lend himself to the views of Cinq-Mars and his friends,* when they eventually assured him that they had certain information of the efforts which the Cardinal was at that very period making to secure his own nomination to the regency of the kingdom, in the event of the then-pending journey to Catalonia, whither Louis was about to proceed early in the ensuing spring, to swear to the inviolate preservation of the ancient laws and privileges of the Catalans; and at the same time to endeavour to possess himself of the province of Roussillon, although the infirm state of his health would have appeared to render such an expedition too hazardous to be contemplated at such a season.

Like his successor Louis XIV., the son of Marie

* Siri, Mercur., vol. ii, p. 571.

de Medicis was one of the most "unamusable" of monarchs; and like Cinq-Mars himself, he was weary of the unvaried routine of pleasures which made up the sum of his existence while confined to his own capital; and thus he welcomed every prospect of change without caring to investigate the motives of those by whom it was proposed. He did not, therefore, for an instant suspect that the motive of his ambitious minister in urging him to undertake upon the instant, and in a state of excessive bodily suffering, an expedition which might with safety have been deferred until a more genial season, was in reality to remove him to a distance from the Parliament and the citizens of Paris, and to place him between two armies, both of which were commanded by his own near relatives and devoted friends, in order that should the already exhausted strength of the invalid sovereign fail him under the fatigue and privation of so severe and tedious an exertion, he might cause himself to be declared Regent of the kingdom after his death.

Others were, however, less blind to the real views of the Cardinal, which were freely canvassed by the courtiers, who looked upon the expedition with distrust as they studied the plan of the campaign, and reflected on the measures which were to be adopted for the government of the country during the absence of the monarch. These were, indeed, undeniably calculated to awaken their apprehensions; as, acting under the advice of his minister, Louis had determined

that he would be accompanied on his journey by the Queen and the Duke d'Orleans; that the Dauphin and the Duke d'Anjou should take up their abode until his return in the castle of Vincennes, of which the governor was devoted to the interests of Richelieu; while the Prince de Condé, who was also his sworn friend, was appointed to the command of Paris, and authorised, in conjunction with the council, who were also the mere creatures of his will, to regulate the internal administration of the kingdom.

All these circumstances, amplified, moreover, by ingenious conjectures and envenomed deductions, Cinq-Mars poured into the willing ear of Monsieur; and while agents were dispatched to Spain and Flanders to invite the co-operation of those sovereigns, the grand-equerry continued his secret visits to the Luxembourg with an impunity that augured well for the success of the perilous undertaking in which he was embarked; and which at length emboldened Monsieur to receive in like manner the emissaries of Ferdinand and Philip. These nocturnal movements were not, however, so unobserved as the conspirators had believed; and the result of the suspicions which they engendered is so quaintly narrated by Rambure that we shall give it in the identical words of the garrulous old chronicler himself:

"One evening," he says; "when I was in the buttery of the Cardinal, where I was eating some sweetmeats, his Eminence entered and asked for a draught of strawberry syrup. While he was drinking it the Count de

Rochefort arrived in his turn, and informed him that during the preceding night as he was passing the palace of the Luxembourg, he saw a man come out whom he instantly recognised as a certain Florent Radbod whom he had formerly met at Brussels, and whom he knew to have been frequently employed in secret matters of state. The lateness of the hour, which was, as he further stated, two in the morning, led him to believe that an individual of this description would not be there save for some important reason.

"'You were very wrong not to follow him,' said his Eminence.

"'I did so;' replied M. de Rochefort; 'but he was on his guard, and soon perceived that he was dogged. Therefore, thinking it better not to excite his suspicions, I turned aside and left him.'

"'You did well;' said Richelieu; 'but what description of person is this Radbod? What is his age? his complexion? his height? Tell me every particular by which he may be recognised. M. de Rambure, have you your pencil about you?'

"'I have my tablets, Monseigneur."

"'Write down then without loss of time,' said the Cardinal; 'the portrait of this man.'

"I immediately obeyed, and my task was no sooner completed than his Eminence gave orders that at every post-house where carriages could be hired notice should be instantly given to himself if a person answering the description should endeavour to secure the means of

leaving Paris. He also stationed men at every avenue leading from the city, who were to watch night and day, lest he might escape in the coach of an acquaintance. On the following morning his Eminence sent to summon me an hour before dawn, and I was surprised on my arrival to find him pacing his chamber in his dressing-gown.

"'Rambure,' he said as I entered; 'I confess to you that I suspect some conspiracy is on foot against the King, the state, and myself; and, moreover, if I am not deceived, it is organising at the Luxembourg with the consent and connivance of the Duke d'Orleans; but as this is mere suspicion, I am anxious, in order to see my way more clearly, to place some confidential person as a sentinel near the palace to watch who goes in and out.'

"After having hesitated for a time, I told his Eminence that I was willing to undertake the adventure, and quite ready to obey his commands.

"'I have faith in you, M. de Rambure;' said the Cardinal; 'I am perfectly convinced of the affection which you bear, not only towards the King and the state, but also towards myself; but I have determined to desire M. de Rochefort to disguise himself as a cripple, and to take up his position in front of the Luxembourg, where he must remain day and night until he has discovered whether it were really the Fleming that he saw.'

"Then, summoning a page who was waiting in the

ante-chamber, his Eminence sent for M. de Rochefort, who was not long in coming; and told him what he proposed. Rochefort, who was always ready to comply with every wish of the Cardinal, immediately declared his willingness to play the part assigned to him; and a trusty person who had attended him to the apartment of Monseigneur was instructed to procure without loss of time, and with the greatest secrecy, a pair of crutches, a suit of rags, and all the articles necessary to complete the metamorphosis.

" His Eminence having, on the return of the lacquey, expressed his desire to witness the effect of the disguise, M. de Rochefort retired to another chamber, where, with the assistance of his servant, he exchanged his velvet vest and satin haut-de-chausses for the foul garb of a mendicant; this done, he smeared his face with dirt, and crouching down in a corner, he requested me to announce to Monseigneur that he was ready to receive him. His Eminence was astonished at his appearance, as well as to see him act the personage he had assumed as if he had studied and practised it all his life. He told him to set forth, and that if he succeeded in his attempt he would render him the greatest service which he had ever received.

" As soon as the Cardinal had taken leave of Rochefort, he said to me: 'In the disguise the count has on, and when he is crouched upon his dunghill like a miserable cripple, it will be easy for him to look every one in the face; and I hope he will make some discovery of that which troubles me.' His Emi-

nence then told me that he wanted my valet, to place him in disguise in another direction. I therefore called him. He was a very sharp fellow at everything that was required of him; and the Cardinal made him put on a shabby cassock, with a false beard of grizzled hair and eyebrows to match, which were all fastened on with a certain liquid so firmly to the skin that it was necessary to apply vinegar in which the ashes of vine-twigs had been steeped, when they instantly fell off. My Basque was at length dressed in a torn, threadbare cassock, masked by his false beard, with an old hat upon his head, a breviary under his arm, and a tolerably thick stick in his hand, and received an order to post himself near the little gate of the Luxembourg stables. The Cardinal then desired me not to leave him, as he had certain orders to give me which he could not intrust to every one on such an occasion.

"M. de Rochefort took up his station at the corner of the Rue de Tournon, laid himself down on a heap of manure, and began, with his face covered with mud and filth, to cry out continually and dolefully as if he had been in agony and want; and he played his part so naturally that several charitable folks were touched by his misery, and gave him alms. From his dunghill he saw numbers of carriages pass and repass, and he began to be afraid that his prey would escape him. He consequently resolved to approach nearer to the gates of the palace, where his intolerable groans so harassed the Swiss guards of Monsieur that they threatened to drive him

away, but upon his promise to be more quiet they permitted him to remain. He continued patiently at his post for three days and three nights without seeing anything to justify the suspicions of the Cardinal, and I was careful to visit him at intervals in order to receive his report; but when I found that so much time had been lost, I began to think that the Fleming would not, in all probability, enter the palace by the gate facing the Carmelite Convent, and Rochefort agreeing with me on this point, he resolved to change his station. The very same night he saw him arrive, and let himself in with a key that he carried about him; and an hour afterwards he observed another man stop at the same door, and enter by the same means. He was wrapped in a cloak so that the count could not recognise him; but he desired my valet who was not far off at the time, to follow him when he came out, by which means we ascertained that the individual who was thus tracked to his own residence was the grand-equerry of France M. de Cinq-Mars; while before the end of another week, we discovered Radbod in the same manner."*

Were not this incident recorded by one of the actors in the adventure, it would have been impossible to have related it with any faith in its veracity; as, assuredly never was the meaning of "secret service" defined more broadly or more unblushingly than in the instance of the sycophantic courtier who divested himself of his

* Rambure, Unpublished MS., vol. xx, pp. 6—13.

brilliant attire to don the unsavoury tatters of a beggar, and his velvet-covered couch for the manure-heap of a city street; while as little would it be credited that any man in power would venture to suggest so revolting an expedient to an individual of high birth and position, the companion of princes, and the associate of court ladies. Nor is it the least singular feature of the tale that the chronicler by whom it is told indulges in no expression of disgust, either at the indelicate selfishness of Richelieu, or the undignified complaisance of his adherent; although he evidently seeks to infer that the Cardinal did not venture to request so monstrous a concession from himself; and dwells with such palpable enjoyment upon all the details of Rochefort's overweening condescension, that it is easy to detect his dread of being suspected by his readers of an equal amount of disgraceful self-abnegation.

The arrest and subsequent execution of the ill-fated Cinq-Mars and his friend M. de Thou, together with the cowardly policy of Monsieur, who no sooner found his treason discovered than he once more wrote to demand his pardon from the King, and to renew his promises of future loyalty and devotion,* are circumstances of such universal notoriety that we shall not permit ourselves to enlarge upon them. It must suffice, therefore, to say that this new peril had merely served to increase alike the

* Montresor, Mém., p. 162. Le Clerc, vol. ii, pp. 543—562. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 544—552. Capefigue, vol. ii, pp. 99—125.

bodily suffering, and the irascibility of Richelieu, who even on the very brink of the grave, was indulging in schemes of vengeance. He saw on all sides only enemies armed against his life; and by a supreme effort, to which a less vigorous intellect than his own must have proved unequal, he rallied all the failing energies of nature to pay back the universal debt of hatred which he was conscious that he had incurred.

Such was the temper of his mind while the unfortunate Queen-mother was yet dreaming of a reconciliation with her son, and an old age of honour in her adopted country through the agency of Rubens; but her still sanguine spirit had betrayed her into forgetting the fact that the dying tiger tears and rends its victim the most pitilessly in its death-agony; and this was the case with the rapidly sinking minister, who was no sooner apprised of the arrival of the painter-prince in the capital than he dispatched a letter to Philip of Spain to urge him to demand the presence of Rubens on the instant at Madrid, and to detain him in that city until he should hear further from himself. The request of so dangerous an adversary as Richelieu was a command to Philip, who hastened to invite the illustrious Fleming to his court with all speed, upon an affair of the most pressing nature; and when Rubens would have lingered in order to fulfil a mission which he considered as sacred, he was met by the declaration that Louis desired to defer the audience which he had already

conceded until after the return of the Maestro from the Spanish capital. With a heavy heart Rubens accordingly left Paris, aware that this temporary banishment was the work of the vindictive Cardinal, who was thus depriving his unhappy benefactress of the last friend on earth who had the courage to defend her cause; but as he drove through the city gates he was far from anticipating that his freedom of action was to be trammelled for an indefinite period; and that he was in fact about to become the temporary prisoner of Philip IV.

Nor was the persevering cruelty of Richelieu yet satiated; he knew by his emissaries that the end of Marie de Medicis was rapidly approaching, but he was also aware that through the generous sympathy of Charles of England and the King of Spain she was still in the receipt of a sufficient income to insure her comparative comfort; and even this was too much for him to concede to the mistress whom he had betrayed; thus, only a few months elapsed ere the pensions hitherto accorded to the persecuted Princess were withheld by both monarchs;* who, in their terror of the formidable Cardinal, suffered themselves to overlook their duty and their loyalty to a woman and a Queen, and their affection towards the mother of their respective consorts.

Overwhelmed by this new misfortune, Marie de

* Sismondi, vol. xxiii, p. 510.

Medicis found herself reduced to the greatest extremity. Unable to liquidate the salaries of those members of her household who had accompanied her into exile, she was abandoned by many among them; while the few jewels which she had hitherto retained were gradually disposed of in order to support those who still clung with fidelity to her fallen fortunes; but even this resource at length failed; and during the winter months, unable any longer to purchase fuel, she was compelled to permit her attendants to break up all such articles of furniture as could be made available for that purpose.*

This extreme of wretchedness, however, which would have sufficed to exhaust the most robust health and the most vigorous youth, was rapidly sapping the toil-worn and tortured existence of Marie de Medicis; and, aware that she had nearly reached the term of her sufferings, on the 2nd of July, 1642, she executed a will which is still preserved in the royal library of Paris,† wherein she expressed her confidence that Louis XIII. would cause the mortuary ceremonies consequent upon her decease to be solemnised in a manner befitting her dignity as Queen of France; and bequeathed certain legacies to her servants, and to the several charitable institutions of Cologne. This duty performed, she consented at the entreaty of her attendants to undergo a painful operation, and to

* Dreux du Radier, vol. v, pp. 258, 259.

† MS. Dupuy, vol. 590.

submit to such remedies as were likely to prove most efficient, although she herself expressed a conviction of their utter uselessness. She then received the last sacraments of the church; tenderly embraced those who stood about her; and after a violent accession of fever, expired at mid-day on the morrow, with the breath of prayer upon her lips.* Once or twice, blent with the pious outpourings of her departing spirit, her attendants had distinguished the name of her son—of that son by whom she had been abandoned to penury; and on each occasion a shade of pain passed across her wasted features. Her maternal love did not yield even to bodily agony; but the struggle was brief. Her eyes closed, her breath suddenly failed: and all was over.

Thus perished, in a squalid chamber, between four bare walls—her utter destitution having, as we have already stated, driven her to the frightful alternative of denuding the very apartment which was destined to witness her death-agony of every inflammable article that it contained, in order by such means to prepare the scanty meal that she could still command—and on a wretched bed which one of her own lacqueys would, in her period of power, have disdained to occupy; childless, or worse than childless; homeless, hopeless, and heart-wrung, the haughty daughter of the Medici—the

* Le Vassor, vol. x, Book L, p. 589. Capefigue, vol. vi, pp. 121, 122. Sismondi, vol. xxiii, pp. 509, 510. Le Clerc, vol. ii, p. 558. Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 542.

brilliant Regent of France; the patroness of art; the dispenser of honours; and the mother of a long line of princes.

Surely history presents but few such catastrophes as this. The soul sickens as it traces to its close the career of this unhappy and persecuted Princess. Whatever were her faults, they were indeed bitterly expiated. As a wife she was outraged and neglected; as a Queen she was subjected to the insults of the arrogant favourites of a dissolute court; as a Regent she was trammelled and betrayed; the whole of her public life was one long chain of disappointment, heart-burning, and unrest; while as a woman, she was fated to endure such misery as can fall to the lot of few in this world.

The remains of the ill-fated Marie de Medicis were, a few hours after her decease, transported to the cathedral of Cologne, where they lay in state an entire week, during which period Rosetti, the papal nuncio, whose dread of Richelieu had caused him to absent himself from the dying bed, as he had previously done from the wretched home of the persecuted Princess, each day performed a funeral service for the repose of her soul. Her heart was, by her express desire, conveyed to the convent of La Flêche; while her body was ultimately transported to France, and deposited in the royal vaults of St. Denis.

The widow of Henry IV. had at last found peace in the bosom of her God; and she had been so long an exile from her adopted country that the circum-

stances of her death were matter rather of curiosity than of regret throughout the kingdom.

The King was apprised of her demise as he was returning from Tarascon, where he had been visiting the Cardinal, who was then labouring under the severe indisposition which, five months subsequently, terminated in his own dissolution. For the space of four days Louis XIII. abandoned himself to the most violent grief, but at the expiration of that period he suffered himself to be consoled; while Richelieu, who even when persecuting the Queen-mother to the death, had always asserted his reverence for, and gratitude towards his benefactress, caused a magnificent service to be performed in her behalf in the collegiate church.

Tardy were the lamentations, and tardy the orisons, which reached not the dull ear of the dead in the gloomy depths of the regal Abbey.

THE END.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street

00029816

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 March, 2016